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ABSTRACT

This book examines the ways in which Chinese literature offers a vast array of prospects, new interpretations, new fields of study, and new themes for the study of women. As a result of the global movement toward greater recognition of gender equality and human dignity, the study of women as portrayed in Chinese literature has a long and rich history. A single volume cannot cover the enormous field but offers volume is a starting point for further research. Several renowned Chinese writers and researchers contributed to the book. The volume includes the following: (1) Introduction (Li Yu-ning); (2) Concepts of Redemption and Fall through Woman as Reflected in Chinese Literature (Tsung Su); (3) The Poems of Li Qingzhao (1084-1141) (Kai-yu Hsu); (4) Images of Women in Yuan Drama (Fan Pen Chen); (5) The Vanguards--The Truncated Stage (The Women of Lu Yin, Bing Xin, and Ding Ling) (Liu Nienling); (6) New Woman vs. Old Mores: A Study of Woman Characters in Ba Jin's Torrents Trilogy (Tsung Su); (7) Desire and Desperation: An Analysis of the Female Characters in Cao Yu's Play The Thunderstorm (Wan Ning); and (8) The Single Woman as Seen in the Writings of Contemporary Chinese Women Writers (Liu Nienling). A glossary of Chinese names in Chinese and pinying is appended. (EH)

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Images of Women in Chinese Literature

Nü Wa smelts stones to repair the sky (myth)
— by the Qing painter Ren Yi.

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Images of Women in Chinese Literature

Edited by
Li Yu-ning

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1994

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To
All my excellent teachers in
Chinese language and literature

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Major Periods of Chinese History

Xia	legendary
Shang	
traditional dates	1766–1122 B.C.
modern scholarship dates	ca. 1600–1027 B.C.
Zhou	1027–256 B.C.
Western Zhou	1027–771 B.C
Eastern Zhou	771–256 B.C.
Qin	221–207 B.C.
Han	202 B.C.–220 A.D.
Period of Division	220–589
Sui	581–618
Tang	618–907
Five Dynasties	907–960
Song	960–1279
Northern Song	960–1126
Southern Song	1126–1279
Yuan (Mongol)	1271-1368
Ming	1368–1644
Qing (Manchu)	1644–1911
Republic of China	1911–Present
People's Republic of China	1949–Present

Preface and Acknowledgments

Ever since I began doing research on Chinese women in the late 1960s, I have been keenly aware of the fact that histories of China and the Chinese people, like histories of other nations and peoples, have been written with few references to women. But, there are sources for the study of Chinese women, and in my searches for historical materials I have looked not just in archives and libraries, but also in what I see, what I hear, and what I know from my own life and the world around me. Research and observation led me to the view, more than a decade ago, that Chinese women, past and present, were and are as varied as Chinese men in their capabilities, temperaments, and activities. There was and still is a wide range of diversity among Chinese women. Constant comparisons of the past and the present have also convinced me that there is significant historical continuity amid the many changes Chinese women have experienced in modern times. Hence, I have taken the position that during the past century Chinese women have gradually and slowly transformed themselves, by integrating indigenous traditions and foreign influences. It is my conception that Chinese women, past and present, have had a thousand faces, a thousand personalities, a thousand capabilities, and a thousand achievements, in history, literature, culture, family, and society.

Thanks to my many excellent teachers in Chinese language and literature when I was a student, I have always cherished reading Chinese literature. While doing research on Chinese women, it was only natural for me to seek inspiration and support from Chinese literature, which is an extremely rich source on women. I was curious whether images of women in Chinese lit-

erature could help us to understand and appreciate Chinese women in history and in contemporary life. In order to stimulate research and writing on this subject, I organized a panel on "Images of Women in Chinese Literature" for the New York Asian Conference of the AAS, October 12–13, 1984, at Cortland, New York. Three friends participated in this panel: Tsung Su with her paper "Concepts of Redemption and Fall Through Women as Reflected in Chinese Literature," Wan Ning with her paper "Images of Women in Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm*," and Liu Nienling with her paper "The Single Woman as Seen in Writings of Contemporary Chinese Women Writers." Dr. Oscar Chiang was the discussant. As the audience responded very favorably to the panel, I decided to pursue this subject further and asked my panelists for permission to have their papers published. Now, looking back, I would like to express my gratitude to these four writer-scholars for supporting me at the initial stage of this new subject of study. I would also like to thank Professor Kuang-huan Fan of the State University of New York at Cortland, who was then serving as the Conference Chairman, for accepting my panel as part of the conference. In order to keep the project moving, I invited Tsung Su and Liu Nienling to deliver papers at the International Conference on the History of Democratic Movements in 20th Century China, held on May 21-22, 1988, at Columbia University in New York. The former delivered her paper "New Woman vs. Old Mores: A Study of Women Characters in Ba Jin's *Torrents* Trilogy," and the latter her essay "The Vanguards — The Truncated Stage (The Women of Lu Yin, Bing Xin, and Ding Ling)." In 1992, I had the good fortune to meet Fan Pen Chen, and I invited her to write the article "Images of Women in Yuan Drama." Included in this volume is also Kai-yu Hsu's article "The Poems of Li Ch'ing-chao," which first appeared in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol.

LXXVII, No. 5, December 1962. I would like to thank the MLA for giving me permission to reprint this article and to change the romanization of Chinese words in Professor Hsu's article from the Wade-Giles system to the *pin-yin* system, which is the one in current use and which has been used by the other authors in this book.

To edit an entire manuscript is a long process, painful at times. I am fortunate to have my husband, J. Mason Gentzler, to encourage, support, and advise me at all times. I am also deeply grateful to Professor Phylis Lan Lin and Professor Terri L. Johnson of the University of Indianapolis, and Mr. Alfred Tsang, for publishing this book and for their generous and kind help. John W. Johnson has been in charge of designing the book, and deserves all credit for giving it a handsome appearance. He was also helpful in many other important ways. Doctor John S. Lin of St. John's University, Professor Kang-i Sun Chang of Yale University and Professor Catherine Yi-yu Cho Woo of San Diego State University have given me much appreciated encouragement and support.

To the following, in alphabetical order, I wish to acknowledge with gratitude on behalf of Outer Sky Press, their financial contributions to the printing of this book: Dr. Catherine Bowen, Ms. May Chao, Mr. Pi-ch'uan Huang, the Huang Hsing Foundation, Ms. Yuan Lin Kuo, the Pacific Cultural Foundation, and the late Rev. Edward Whalley.

To all those mentioned above, I am deeply indebted. Words are shallow compared to the depth of my appreciation and gratitude. I only hope that this volume will prove that their help and support have been worthwhile.

Li Yu-ning
January 16, 1994
Bronxville, New York

Introduction

Li Yu-ning

One of the most noteworthy academic trends in recent decades has been the increasing attention being given to the study of women, as a result of the global movement toward greater recognition of gender equality and human dignity. New fields of research have been opened and new interpretations of many time-honored subjects have been presented. Chinese literature, with its long and rich history, offers a vast array of prospects for such new interpretations, new fields of study and new themes. Some of the possibilities are explored in this volume.

As a relatively new, and potentially enormous field, women in Chinese literature cannot be covered in one single volume. The aim of this collection is to demonstrate the fruitfulness of some possible approaches to the subject, to present new information and new perspectives on some well-known works, and to introduce authors who are not as well known as they deserve to be.

Diversity

Images of women in various genres, folklore, poetry, fiction and drama, in writings from the distant past to the present day, and in the works of both male and female authors, are diverse, even contradictory. Yet, in these essays some persistent themes emerge. In her wide ranging article on "Concepts of Redemption and Fall Through Women in Chinese Literature," Tsung Su

shows how diverse the images of Chinese women have been. Tsung, herself a novelist, finds a polarity in images of women in ancient Chinese literature, which she then shows continues into modern times. On the one hand is the myth of the goddess Nü Wa, who created humankind and then saved humanity from a disastrous fate by repairing the sky. At the opposite extreme is the goddess Ba, a daughter of the legendary Yellow Emperor, who brought destruction and death through the intense heat she produced as goddess of drought. Tsung sees these two as archetypes, frequently found in other human societies — the Life-Giving Mother and the female Destroyer-Deceiver.

In China, the destructive woman is a familiar figure in myth and legend; many of the best known women in Chinese history have usually been portrayed almost exclusively in negative terms. The three beautiful women who, according to legend and popular tales, brought about the downfall of the Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou dynasties, as well as the three most powerful empresses in historical times, Empress Lü of the Han, Empress Wu of the Tang and Empress Dowager Cixi of the late Qing, have all been condemned. And Yang Gueifei, perhaps the most famous of all, has been blamed for the decline of the Tang. Nor have negative images been confined to such highly placed women. Terms such as *nühuo* (female plague) and *huoshui* (female deluge), which appear in many kinds of writing, are used to describe women from all stations of life. Tsung Su offers some new insights into this type of woman in several traditional novels.

She shows that in *Journey to the West* women are not only troublemakers in this world, but also threats to (male) spiritual enlightenment. During their journey to their Buddhist goal, the novel's heroes, the monk Tripitika, Monkey and their male companions, are repeatedly obstructed and subjected

to a variety of trials by monsters and evil spirits, many of whom appear in female form as sexual temptresses, endangering the spiritual progress of the pilgrim and his escorts.

While there is a humorous dimension to the characterization of the heroes and villains of *Journey to the West,* the portrayal of women in *Water Margin (Shuihu Zhuan)* is almost uniformly misogynist. In the world of the 108 daring and adventuresome male and female bandit/rebels of this novel, women are manifestly malevolent. Younger and prettier women are lewd and wanton, while older ones are calculating and rapacious. For comfort and solace, the heroes turn not to women, but to food, wine and the companionship of other men. The famous saying, "Within the four seas, all men are brothers," refers to males, not to humankind.

Tsung Su cites the analysis of Sun Shuyu, who believes that an important reason why women are perceived as bothersome in this novel is that female companionship and sexuality might be divisive to outlaws living a marginal existence, in which cohesion is essential to survival. Women are therefore seen not only as burdens, but also as threats to male solidarity.

Tsung Su's insightful analysis of female temptresses, oppressors, and torturers, who bring about the physical and moral degradation of male characters might also be extended to cover such other well-known novels as *Jin Ping Mei* and *Xingshi Yingyuan Zhuan (A Marriage to Awaken the World).*[1] But the point is adequately made, and the inadequacy of perhaps the most common image of Chinese women, as frail, docile and submissive, helplessly subject to the whims of fate and the men in their lives, should be apparent.

Another prejudice against women, embodied in the well-known saying, "Virtue for a woman is to be without talent," was widespread in traditional society and has continued into modern times.

The sad, even tragic consequences of this prejudice appear over and over again in the greatest of all Chinese novels, *Dream of Red Mansions*, as well as in many other works. But contrary cases are not hard to find, in real life and in literature, and Tsung Su cites examples of various positive images of talented women in folklore, popular tales and drama. One major genre of romantic fiction, "tales of talented scholars and beautiful women," (in which heroes are normally also good looking and the heroines clever and intelligent), has been popular for centuries, among the illiterate audiences of Chinese opera as well as the educated readers of stories and novels.[2] The plot, which can be traced back at least as far as the Tang dynasty, is fairly standard. A young aspiring scholar, seeking fame and fortune through the civil service examination system, meets a beautiful young woman, whose material and/or psychological support enable him to overcome poverty and various other weaknesses and setbacks. When he eventually succeeds (usually gloriously) he either returns and marries her, or else abandons her for a marriage more advantageous to his career. The heroine is normally devoted to the point of self-denial, and if abandoned, bears her fate with dignity and noble resignation. The sympathies of the reader are drawn to the devoted heroine more than to the young scholar, who is frequently portrayed as morally weak and lacking sufficient self-discipline to study.[3]

Tsung Su analyzes one well-known novel of this genre, *Ping Shang Leng Yan*, which tells the story of two talented young scholars and two talented and beautiful young women. The heroines' poetic talents far surpass those of the two heroes. But this is not presented as a threat or an impediment to the young scholars; rather, they are inspired and encouraged by the heroines' intelligence and talents to strive for the success they eventually attain. Thus, as Tsung Su points out,

this novel implicitly refutes the idea that "virtue for a woman is to be without talent." In this and similar novels, virtue and talent are inextricably interrelated in the heroines, and their possession of these qualities is beneficial to the heroes. Such a positive attitude toward exceptionally gifted women does not seem to have been so unusual as to be seen as an anomaly. The two contradictory notions coexisted, just as Nü Wa and Ba coexisted in the pantheon of gods and goddesses. This subject surely deserves further study.

From historical sources we know that the talents of many women were appreciated. Li Qingzhao (1084-1141) is perhaps the best known example. Li came from a literary family, and grew up in an affluent environment, in which poetry writing was a regular part of the parties and games she enjoyed. At eighteen, she married a scholar named Zhao Mingzheng. This happy marriage was frequently celebrated in later centuries as an ideal union, for the couple shared many enthusiasms in common, such as writing poetry and collecting paintings and antiques. In 1128 Zhao died of malaria; in later years Li suffered many other blows, including the loss of her home and library as a result of the Jin invasions of north China. Her poems, in the voice of a woman most readers assume to be Li herself, are filled with sorrow and nostalgia. The female persona of these poems is the archetypal frail and wistful woman, helpless and resigned to whatever befalls her. But, as Kaiyu Hsu shows so well, although Li was indeed sad, her spirit was never broken; she remained in contact with the worlds of politics and literature, and continued to write, albeit not presenting the image of a woman with an indomitable will, a depiction which she seems to have represented in actuality. This serves as a caution against drawing conclusions too easily from standard depictions of women not only in literature but in other arts such as painting as well.

Of course, strength of character has not necessarily been seen as incompatible with the gentler "feminine" graces in Chinese literature. Perhaps the best known woman warrior, now as in the past, is Hua Mulan, who, dressed as a male, fought for many years alongside male companions who never guessed she was a woman, and whose name has become synonymous with courage, determination and selfless patriotism. Shisanmei, the heroine of the popular Qing novel, *Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan,* is in the tradition of such admirable women. Shisanmei is not only beautiful, but also skilled in the martial arts, which she uses to punish evil and redress wrongs. Like the martial heroines who were later to appear so frequently in Chinese films, she is superior to most men, in talent, moral courage, and even physical strength. Yet, in the end, she consents to becoming the second wife of An Ji, the reticent, even cowardly, young scholar whose life she has saved. For Tsung Su, this conclusion holds no intended irony. Rather, it illustrates the power of the conventional attitudes of patriarchal society over the mind of the author, whose limited imagination could only envision the woman, no matter how talented, submitting to the man, no matter how mediocre. But it is also significant that an author with such a limited vision could portray a woman so superior in so many ways to so many men, including the one she eventually marries. Whether female authors perceived the tension, or absence of tension, in such situations differently from male authors is another subject for future study.

Love is an important theme in all genres of Chinese literature. Fan Pen Chen shows in her solidly researched article that romantic heroines constitute the major type of female characters in plays written during the Yuan dynasty (1234–1368), when China was under the rule of the Mongols.[4] Chen rejects theories which maintain that women portrayed in these plays are ex-

The Poetry Club — from a Qing edition of Dream of Red Mansions

pressions of protests against the injustices of society. Rather, she sees them as "ultimately props used by the playwrights for the benefit of their male partners. They are valued because they assist in the patriarchal cause." To Chen, the romantic heroines are created to satisfy the fantasies of the largely male audiences of the time: "Beautiful, intelligent, faithful and often times righteous, the romantic heroine is an ideal object of love. Her fairy-tale romance fulfills the private fantasies of the audience, for the majority of whom marriage to a person one has fallen in love with can only be a dream." Some readers may feel that romance also has a universal appeal, because it offers emotional and imaginative space for the reader or the audience, an opportunity to take a free ride away from reality. Is this not a reason for the enduring popularity of modern romantic films?

These romantic heroines bear resemblances to women in other genres. In the Chinese tradition, the combination of talent, beauty, and virtue has been an ideal, which was as widespread as the idea that to be without talent was a virtue for women. Kang-i Sun Chang has demonstrated that the debate over women's talent/virtue (*cai*/*de*) has had a long history and that regardless of restrictions and opposition the number of women poets mushroomed in the Ming-Qing period. It was not only gentry women who aspired for recognition. Talented courtesans were also able to achieve fame and status; for example, Liu Rushi (1618–1664), won renown and admiration for her poetry and painting, and for her moral courage and earnestness.[5] To say that there was in traditional China some space for some women to develop their talents and virtues and to achieve recognition does not mean that the space was expansive or comparable to what was available to men in otherwise similar circumstances. Yet, recognition of diversity is essential to understanding the kinds of lives Chinese women lived, as well as the opportunities they were

denied. Expressions of discrimination and admiration are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and they can coexist in society and literature.

Heralds For Equality

A task remains for future research to reveal the full range and variety of images of women in literature as well as in historical and other forms of writing. It is clear that, even though pre-modern Chinese literature contains many female characters notable for their moral, literary and even martial excellence, and even though there were indeed many talented women in actuality, the vast majority had few, if any, opportunities to develop or display their abilities. The most prestigious career, government service, was not open to them. For women with scholarly knowledge and literary talents, the denial of the opportunity to participate in the civil service examinations, the principal system of recruiting officials, was particularly galling. How many young women were well aware that their talents surpassed those of their fathers, brothers or other male relatives, men who not only were able to take the exams but who actually passed them? We know that some women nourished the desire to participate, for this fantasy was embodied in women's writings, particularly in the genre of romantic novels known as *tanci*, whose authors, leading characters, and (from what we know) readers, were, by and large, women. In the most common plot of these lengthy works, the heroine, disguised as a young man, performs magnificently in each successive stage of the examinations, passing the highest, the metropolitan exam for the *jinshi* degree, with flying colors. She rapidly rises to high office, in some cases even becoming Prime Minister, before some set of circumstances forces her to reveal her true identity. What daydreams these flights of fancy must reflect![6]

A better known instance of the portrayal of women as

the equals of men is the early 19th century novel *Jinghua Yuan*, by the male author Li Ruzhen.[7] Among the many imaginary lands Li depicts in this lengthy novel is the Land of Gentlemen, where women are equal partners of men. In her article, Tsung Su shows how the author uses this imagined setting to protest such actual injustices in Chinese society as foot binding, arranged marriage,[8] and polygamy. The full extent of fictional protests against the double standard and other forms of discrimination prior to China's being opened to Western influences remains to be investigated, but would certainly include *Jinghua Yuan* as well as such other works as *Poan Jingqi (Striking the Table in Amazement at the Wonders)* by the Ming writer Ling Mengzu, a collection of tales highlighting the unfairness of the double standard in marriage and remarriage.

The Emergence of New Women

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the introduction and spread of Western ideas further aroused consciousness that, as human beings, and as citizens, women should be treated equally.

These ideas found expression in such fictional works as *Niehai Hua* by Zeng Pu and the *Travels of Lao Can (Lao Can Youji)* by Liu E.[9] Much additional momentum for change, in literature and in life, was generated by the May Fourth Movement, which began with student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4, 1919, against the territorial provisions of the Versailles peace treaties, and soon spread to other cities.[10]

Among the many social and cultural reforms advocated in the following years were democracy, individualism, freedom, and equality, including equality for women, which was frequently seen as emblematic of equality in general.

One aspect of this movement was the emergence of an ever increasing number of significant women writers,

whose short stories and novels reflect the general spirit of the times as well as the lives of women during this period of such exhilarating and stressful change. In her article, "The Vanguards — The Truncated Stage," Liu Nienling analyzes some important women characters in the writings of three of the most important women writers, Lu Yin (1898-1934), Bing Xin (1900-), and Ding Ling (1904-1986).

Although Lu Yin is well-known in China as a writer of the May Fourth period, her views on women have received little attention, in China or the West. Liu Nienling's analysis shows that Lu Yin is worthy of study, for she had her own understanding of the limited successes women could attain within the existing social framework, and showed how what is now called consciousness-raising was a prerequisite for women's liberation. Though women were finding new forms of employment as office workers, they were merely "decorative flower vases" in the apt metaphor of the day, and though they could hold full-time jobs, they still had to perform all their traditional household tasks. We can see that Lu Yin was an early herald of problems which continue to plague women to this day.

Bing Xin has enjoyed a long and distinguished career, and her writing is celebrated for her lucid style and her warm portrayal of mother love and childhood innocence. Liu shows that although the modern, Western-educated middle class women of Bing Xin's fiction have been freed of some traditional constraints, their choices still remain very narrowly limited. They are either wives of Westernized men who serve as Western style hostesses, or they are single women with Western style careers. They can have either marriage or career, but not always both. And in either case, their roles are sometimes predefined. However, having made their choices, Bing Xin's heroines seem accepting, or perhaps resigned, and do not protest this limitation.

Ding Ling is probably the most familiar of the three writers Liu discusses. As controversial in her personal life as in the subject matter of her fiction, Ding Ling and her characters reflect the diversity and complexities of Chinese women in the modern world. The person who had the strongest influence on her was her mother, who was well-educated, talented, energetic and strong-willed. Widowed young, she not only brought up her children but also pursued a teaching career. As Liu remarks, "Being the daughter of such an accomplished mother, Ding Ling did not create women characters who were fair damsels in distress or ladies by the fireside." Yet, for all her admiration of her mother, most of Ding Ling's women bear somewhat closer resemblance to herself, for they are rebels — passionate, iconoclastic and independent. Liu shows that for them, revolution and love are entirely compatible. This did not turn out to be the case for Ding Ling herself, and when the two did come into conflict, she bent herself to suit the Communist Party, her passionate individuality thus succumbing to hard political realities.

These three women writers see the problems of modern Chinese women from different perspectives, each highlighting different problems, and each writing in her own distinctive voice. It is evident that this does not merely reflect their individual temperaments and artistic visions, but is indicative of a wide range of responses by Chinese women to the new situations they faced in the 20th century. While some struggled for mere survival, others were able to make their own choices in love, marriage, and careers. Some were passionate and rebellious; others, gentle and passive. And although these three women writers' ability to exert influence was cut short, by an early death in Lu Yin's case, by convention in Bing Xin, and by politics in Ding Ling, they did help to show the way for succeeding generations of women writers.

Male writers were also portraying changes in Chinese society, including changes among women and in attitudes toward women. Ba Jin (1904–), one of the most influential writers in the 1930s and 1940s, wrote a heart-rending trilogy, *Family, Spring,* and *Autumn,* the tragic saga of four generations of the Gao family in Sichuan. The first novel, *Family,* was published in 1931, and the remaining two were completed during the War of Resistance against Japan. In her essay on this widely read and highly praised trilogy, Tsung Su analyzes the women characters, whom she divides into two main categories: the passive Woman-as-Victim and the active New Woman (the Woman Warrior). The beautiful and gentle Mei belongs to the first category. She is in love with her cousin Juexin, the eldest of the three Gao brothers who are the leading male characters of the trilogy, and he loves her. But neither protests when the family elders arrange for each to be married to someone else. So miserable is Mei after her marriage to a heartless good-for-nothing that she succumbs to tuberculosis and dies a lonely death, consumed by sadness and resigned to her "fate."

In creating the character Mei, Ba Jin had a model from life. However, his use of literature as social protest led him to make significant alterations in the life of the fictional Mei. As in the novel, Mei's model in real life was unable to marry her childhood sweetheart. But here the similarities end. The real Mei became the second wife of a much older and very rich man. She produced a good many children, and she grew fat and avaricious.[11] Obviously, these facts did not fit into Ba Jin's theme, so he chose to present Mei as a helpless victim of the traditional society and gave her a convenient, although conventional, exit from his novel — death through suffering and tuberculosis.

Mingfeng, an innocent and attractive maid servant of the Gao family, represents another type of Woman-as-

Victim. She is in love with Juehui, the youngest of the three Gao brothers, and he also loves her. But an elderly, hypocritical "Confucian," a friend of the patriarch of the Gao family, wants her to be his concubine, and the arrangements are completed without consulting her. As she sees no solution to the situation, she drowns herself in the lake of the family's compound. Like Mei, Mingfeng accepts her "fate" and shows no inclination to fight for her own future.

The real-life young maidservant Mingfeng refused to become a concubine of an older man, as does Mingfeng in the novel. But, in actual life, she did not commit suicide. Rather, she chose to marry a poor man,[12] suggesting that the actual Mingfeng was stronger in character than her fictional counterpart.

The New Woman in the trilogy is represented by Qin, a cousin of the Gao brothers, who is portrayed as intelligent, independent, courageous, assertive, and optimistic about the future. She believes that "the world is changing anew everyday, women and men are the same human beings," and she tells herself: "I want to be a human being, the same as a man.... I will walk a new road, a new road." Not only does she choose to go to a coed school, but she also selects her own life partner, Juemin, the second of the three Gao brothers.

Ba Jin's admiration for the New Woman is evident, but he obviously has sympathy for the Woman-as-Victim. The Woman-as-Victim is pathetic, but the most pitiable person in the novel is Juexin, the oldest grandson of the Gao patriarch. In spite of his intelligence, he permits the women he loves, and his young son, to become victims of superstitions, conventions, and family squabbles. His single goal is to try to keep the family together by appeasement and compromise. But, in spite of repeated sacrifices, he fails, and as the trilogy ends, the family breaks up. Of all characters in the novel, male and female, he is the weakest. He may be regarded

as a typical Man-as-Victim, a victim of his misguided allegiance to an ideal of family harmony, which in actuality has little to do with the behavior of those with power who profess it.

In Desire and Desperation, Wan Ning analyzes the three female leads in Cao Yu's famous *Thunderstorm*, which was first performed in 1935 in Tokyo by Chinese scholars and students. This play was immediately recognized as an outstanding example of how the new genre of "spoken drama" (i.e., without the singing which characterized traditional Chinese drama) could illuminate contemporary issues.[13]

The three women characters differ in age, social status, life experience and personality. The oldest, Shiping, has retained her human dignity and moral principles in spite of a lifetime of hardship and suffering. Wan shows how her character contains the best of the traditional image of the mother, selfless love and strength of character to defend her children. Shiping is the moral center of this modern drama. However, her independent spirit is in no way attributed to the influence of intellectual or social changes, but to untainted nobility of character.

Her daughter, Sifeng, like her mother in many ways, is also the image of a traditional dutiful daughter, quiet, and respectful toward her father, though she is well aware of his complete lack of scruples. Perhaps the only modern aspect of her life is her belief that she and her lover, the young master of the household in which she works as a servant (and, unknown to either of them until the tragic ending, her half-brother), will be able to run away and live somewhere on their own, free of their disapproving parents.

In contrast, Fanyi, the mistress of the household in which Sifeng works, is in many ways the new woman, influenced by ideas associated with the May Fourth movement. She is well-educated, a talented artist, and

disinclined to play the role of submissive wife to her overbearing husband. She is free enough of social convention to have an affair with her stepson, and to openly proclaim that she, and only she, is the final judge of her conduct. However, as Wan remarks, unlike Ibsen's Nora, she cannot leave her husband. The fact that Nora, a name already familiar to many Chinese readers when this play was first performed, can so easily be mentioned by a modern Chinese literary critic is surely a sign of change.

Single Women in Contemporary China

The 20th century has certainly seen many significant changes for Chinese women. Foot binding gradually disappeared, women won legal recognition of equality with men, and women found expanded educational and employment opportunities. Most of these trends have accelerated in recent decades. Still, many traditional customs and attitudes have persisted. Obviously, new legal rights, such as those contained in the new Marriage Law of 1950, have not been universally or uniformly implemented throughout such a large country with such a huge and diverse population, nor could this reasonably be expected. In general, change has occurred more rapidly and more extensively in urban than in rural areas. But even in the largest cities, where women have enjoyed greater opportunities, the past has had an influence on the forms these new opportunities have taken. Restrictions on women's individuality and independence due to biases inherited from the past have been a frequent theme in recent writings by women about women in the People's Republic.

Liu Nienling explores an important aspect of this phenomenon in the final article in this collection. Utilizing some of the insights of the critic Li Ziyun, and adding her own trenchant analyses, she discusses the images of single women in the fiction of several prominent

women writers. Li the critic and Zhang Xinxin the novelist, both single women themselves, show how "liberation" has meant the imposition of a male image on women, which both authors believe has been detrimental to women's individuality. In Li's analysis, the rejection of the traditional concept of the virtuous woman as meek and obedient resulted in the notion that a revolutionary woman had to be strong and unyielding, traits traditionally associated with men.

> "The more masculine a woman looked, and behaved, the more revolutionary she was regarded by the Party. The end result was the transformation of female comrades, who did not just look like male comrades, but acted like them. This transformation did not stop at the surface, but went deep into the female psyche."[14]

But, Li Ziyun asks, if effeminate males are considered abnormal (as clearly was the case), why should masculinized women be regarded as ideal? She is led to conclude that there is a masculine bias, a fundamental inequality, inherited from the past, in the whole revolutionary scheme of values.

Similarly, in her fiction Zhang Xinxin[15] has shown how much women lose when new economic opportunities within an otherwise rigid structure force them to make choices they feel they should not have to make, between career and marriage, for instance. Liu analyzes several works whose story lines would not seem alien in a contemporary Western context. Her discussion of *Fangzhou* (The Ark) by Zhang Jie, one of the best known women writers of the middle generation, reveals a variety of biases against single women. The three heroines, middle-aged professionals, share an apartment. They consider themselves just as normal as other women, but that is not how they are viewed by others. Liu Quan, the most attractive, is treated as fair game by predatory males; Jinghua, the bluestocking, is sus-

pected of being "unlike a normal woman"; and Liang Qian, whose father is a powerful official, is considered a disgrace by her family and reprimanded for not behaving as the daughter of such an important father properly should, presumably meaning that she should be married.[16]

In short, these contemporary women writers see in the new equality a kind of uniformity according to old male standards. And, clearly, their ideal is quite different, an equality more tolerant of diversity, not only in roles but in personalities as well.

To attempt to draw any conclusions from such a preliminary endeavor as the present collection would be inappropriate. It may be worthwhile to repeat, however, that the themes of diversity and of continuity and change seem as pertinent to the study of Chinese women in the present as in the past, and, also, to suggest that one of the reasons for the complexities of the present is the diversity that existed in the past. After reading these articles, the reader may draw his or her own conclusions about how much of the present is continuity, and how much is change.

Notes

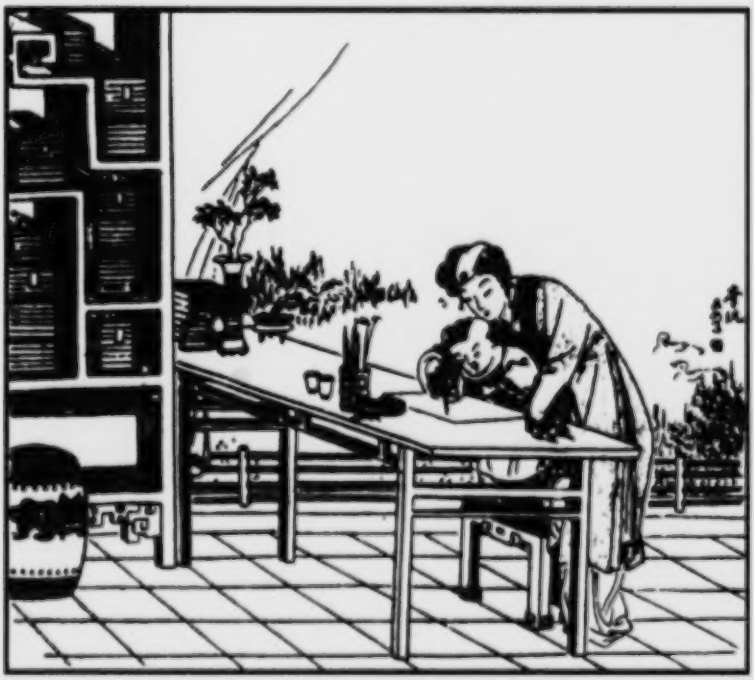
1. For insightful, in-depth analyses of six representative classic Chinese novels, see C.T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction*, New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1968.
2. See Richard C. Hessney, (1985). "Beyond Beauty and Talent: The Moral and Chivalric Self in *The Fortunate Union*," in Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney, eds., *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, pp. 214-250. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1985. Also Richard C. Hessney, (1979). "Beautiful, Talented, and Brave: Seventeenth Century Chinese Scholar-Beauty Romances," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia Univ.
3. The traditional images of talented scholars and beautiful women continue to appear in popular love stories of the early 20th century. Perry Link writes: "The specially gifted

woman often possesses a measure of genius in addition to her beauty. Her genius evidences itself not only in women's skills, such as needlework, but also in the same way as the man's, through brilliant poetry. Similarly, the specially gifted man is usually almost as good-looking as the woman. Equally important, he shares her related qualities of 'female' softness, including a less-than-robust physical constitution and great capacity for loving sympathy.... Often appearing indecisive and withdrawn, part of his appeal to women stems from his need to be mothered. He quite lacks 'machismo.'" *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981, p. 67. For a comprehensive survey of traditional Chinese stories written in the vernacular language, see Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, Harvard Univ. Press, 1981. For an in-depth analysis of female characters in *Dream of Red Mansions*, see Marsha L. Wagner's article, "Maids and Servants in *Dream of the Red Chamber*: Individuality and the Social Order," in *Expressions of Self in Chinese Literature*, edited by Robert E. Hegel and Richard C. Hessney.

4. For a comprehensive survey of Yuan drama, see *The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chü*, by Chung-wen Shih, Princeton Univ. Press, 1976. As to the musical and technical aspects of Yuan drama, see James I. Crump, "The Conventions and Craft of Yuan Drama," in *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, edited with an introduction by Cyril Birch, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1974, pp. 192–219.
5. Kang-i Sun Chang has made important contributions to our understanding of Chinese women and Chinese literature in her monograph: *The Late Ming Poet Ch'en Tzu-lung: Crisis of Love and Loyalism* (Yale Univ. Press, 1991), and her article "Ming-Qing Women Poets and the Notions of 'Talent' and 'Morality,'" delivered at the Conference on Culture and State in Late Imperial China: The Cultural and Political Construction of Norms, Univ. of Californian-Irvine, June 17–21, 1992. Paul S. Ropp has an excellent article on women's literature of the Qing period, see his article "Love, Literacy, and Laments: Themes of women writers in late imperial China." *Women's History Review*, Volume 2, No. 1, 1993.
6. Marina H. Sung has an excellent article on *tanci*: "*T'an-tz'u* and *T'an-tz'u* Narratives," *T'oung Pao* LXXIX (1993).
7. There is an abridged English translation of *Jinghua Yuan*: Li Ju-chen, *Flowers in the Mirror*, edited and translated by

Lin Tai-yi, Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1965.

8. For another interpretation of this episode, see C. T. Hsia, "The Scholar Novelist and Chinese Culture: A Reappraisal of Ching-hua Yuan," in Andrew H. Plaks, ed., *Chinese Narrative: Critical and Theoretical Essays*, Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977, pp. 266–305.
9. Translated by Harold Shadick as *The Travels of Lao Tsan*, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1952, reprinted by Columbia University Press as a Morningside Edition, in 1990.
10. For an excellent survey of these events, see Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960.
11. For some information about the model for Mei, see the article by Huang Ziping, "Mingyun Sanchongzou Jia, yu Jia, yu Jiazhongren" (Trio of Fate — *Family*, "Family," and People in the *Family*), in the monthly *Dushu*, December 1991, Beijing, p. 100. For an informative description of Ba Jin's life, ideas, and works, see Olga Lang, *Pa Chin and His Writings: Chinese Youth Between the Two Revolutions*, Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967. For an in-depth analysis of Ba Jin's works, see C.T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction: 1917–1957*, Yale Univ. Press, 1961, pp. 237–256. One may also consult *Selected Works of Ba Jin*, translated by Sidney Shapiro and Wang Mingjie, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1988.
12. *Dushu*, December 1991, p. 100.
13. For an in-depth study of Cao Yu and his plays, see Joseph S.M. Lau, *Ts'ao Yü: The Reluctant Disciple of Chekhov and O'Neill*, Hong Kong University Press, 1970. For a general introduction to Chinese traditional drama and modern spoken drama, see *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey*, by Colin Mackerras, Beijing: New World Press, 1990, and *Chinese Theater from Its Origins to the Present Day*, edited by Colin Mackerras, University of Hawaii Press, 1983.
14. pp. 184–185, *Images of Women in Chinese Literature*, Vol. I.
15. About Zhang Xinxin, see *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-Portrayals*, edited by Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley, Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992, pp. 136–146.
16. Alison Bailey has written an insightful article on the novella, see "Travelling Together: Narrative Technique in Zhang Jie's 'The Ark,'" in *Chinese Women Writers: Critical Appraisals*, edited by Michael S. Duke, M.E. Sharpe Inc., 1989, pp. 96–111. For an in-depth analysis of Zhang Jie and her works, see Xu Wenyu, *Zhang Jie de Xiaoshuo Shijie* (*Zhang Jie's Ficitional World*), Beijing: Jenmin Chubanshe, 1991.



Li Wan teaching her son
— from a Qing edition of Dream of Red Mansions

Chapter 1

Concepts of Redemption and Fall Through Woman as Reflected in Chinese Literature

Tsung Su

Throughout the ages, the concepts of man's salvation and fall have been a recurrent theme in world literature. Whether it is through his own exertion or limitation, or due to some external forces, man triumphs or degenerates physically and spiritually by means of a complex process of confronting his inner reality and outer context. Through self-realization or the failure of it, he comes to terms with a final recognition of the inner forces and outer agencies which help form or destroy his very existence. And in many cases, the external forces which contribute to his salvation or downfall take the form of the female sex, or the Woman.

The purpose of the present paper is to present the concepts of the fall and salvation of man through woman by a selective examination of Chinese literature, folklore, and myths, from ancient time to the 1930s. Considering the vast body of available sources, the writer realizes the bold, inconclusive, and quixotic nature of the attempt, and thus would like to state from the outset of the paper that the presentation in no way claims to be exhaustive.

As befitting the Chinese tradition of *zhengming* — setting forth nomenclature first — a definition of "salvation" and "fall" is in order. In the Christian tradition, the terms Redemption (Salvation) and Fall inevitably have religious connotations. Man fell through his "origi-

nal sin," but gained redemption through his union with Jesus Christ who sacrificed Himself on man's behalf. But in the present paper, the terms Redemption and Fall are used in their secular context. "Redemption" is defined as man's attainment of moral and ethical elevation, character strengthening, spiritual awakening, and/or worldly success in *gongming* (fame and fortune). "Fall" in turn is defined as moral degeneracy, spiritual debasement, social disgrace, and/or physical destruction.

The paper will be divided into five parts: first, a brief general review of the historical context of woman's image in literature; second, an examination of individual works which present woman as a positive image, that of being helpful to man's fulfillment of worldly goals and self-realization; third, an examination of works which present woman in a negative image, that of being a hindrance to man's mundane pursuits and a lethal inducement to his moral deterioration and/or physical perdition; fourth, a general review of major works of the 1930s; and fifth, conclusion.

Historical Review

Throughout world literature, or in culture more generally, woman usually has been perceived and depicted in polarized, dichotomized and ambivalent terms, either as extravagantly sublime or debasedly profane. In Western culture, this paradox can be best illustrated by the image of the Virgin Mary and that of Eve.

Eve, being humankind's first mother, also exemplified her sex's weakness by submitting to the temptation of the serpent, thus causing the downfall of Man and the subsequent loss of Paradise. In Eve, we have the archetype of woman as transgressing, graceless, unredeemed, a personification of human frailty, weakness of the flesh, the source of calamity and woe. But in the Virgin Mary, whose Immaculate Conception of Christ gave hu-

mankind its Savior, emerges the divine image of love, purity, sacredness, hope, and redemption.

This extreme polarity of perceptions, rooted deep in the religious and mythological beliefs of humankind's primordial consciousness, formed much of man's attitude toward woman, worldwide, in male constructed and oriented cultures. In these cultures, woman was assumed and expected to play a supplementary and submissive role. In pre-Christian Greece, women of strong character and forceful passions were commonly viewed as evil and calamitous, untrustworthy; thus to Homer in the *Odyssey*, "there is no fouler fiend than a woman when her mind is bent to evil," and "no trust is to be placed in women."[1] To Euripides, "there is no evil so terrible as a woman," and "the gods have sent medicines for the venom of serpents; but there is no medicine for a bad woman. She is more noxious than the viper, or than fire itself."[2] To Aristotle, woman is considered to be "an inferior man," to the Roman poet Virgil, "woman is always fickle and changeful." In Biblical terms, to St. Jerome, woman is "the gate of Hell," and the Preacher in the Ecclesiastes of the Old Testament proclaims "and I found more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are fetters; he who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her."[3] In these sentiments, women were regarded as the death traps that caused man's damnation and his forsaking God; thus a Portuguese proverb warns: "when the Devil fails himself, he sends a woman as his agent." Yet the West did not have a monopoly on bias against woman. To the 16th century Hindu poet, Tulsi Das, "Woman is the very root of wickedness, the cause of the bitterest pain, a mine of suffering." It is also this perception of woman as the cause of man's woe and sorrow that induced the 17th century English actor and dramatist Nathaniel Field to exclaim in his play *A Woman Is A Weathercock*: "O woman, woman, woman, woman,

woman! Tortuous as Hell, insatiate as the grave."

The perception of woman as an agent of the Devil may be attributed to man's fear of woman's sexuality and the temptation and challenge it pits against man. Women of extraordinary beauty and physical attraction were regarded with both desire and revulsion, because of the strife and conflicts men wrought against each other in winning them. Helen, whose face "launched a thousand ships" of the Trojan war which lasted ten long and tortuous years and wasted numerous Homeric heroes, was the classic archetype of the beautiful femme fatale. Along the same lineage in mythological and fictional image, were the Biblical Salome, the enchanting daughter of King Herod Philip and Herodias who danced for the head of John the Baptist, the seductive Calypso and the deadly Circe, who could even ensnare the hero Odysseus, the Gypsy dancer Carmen, who brought doom to those who fell in love with her, and the Dostoyevskian heroine Natassya Filippova, whose compelling beauty induced men to frenzied despair and death, as well as numerous others whose beauty and allure caused men woe and undoing.

Thus, female beauty and attraction were both to be desired and feared. Yet, women with no great claim to femininity, but who were strong-minded and self-assertive, were also viewed with aversion. In the classic tragedies of ancient Greece, heroines such as Clytemnestra, Medea, Antigone, and Electra, whose forceful passions and characters drove them to commit crimes, were outside the realm of stereotypical females. And "heroines who act outside the stereotype are sometimes said to be masculine. It is not a compliment to a woman to be classified as masculine. Aristotle judged it inappropriate for a female character to be portrayed as manly or clever."[4]

Either to be feared or to be desired, woman in Western classic antiquity was interpreted more in biased exaggeration than in realism. Bias and exaggeration may

be due to what Sarah Pomeroy calls "misogyny" which "was born of fear of women" and "spawned the ideology of male superiority." Bias and exaggeration may also be due to the fact, as Dr. Samuel Johnson pointed out, that since "the faculty of writing has been chiefly a masculine endowment, the reproach of making the world miserable has been always thrown upon the women."[5]

In the Chinese tradition, woman as cultural prototype finds herself in a similar predicament. Polarity of opinion abounds in folklore, popular myths, and literature. In the mythology of pre-history, the myth of the Goddess Nü Wa, who created man and saved him from a disastrous fate by repairing the heavenly sky with colorful stones, adds just a touch of romanticism and femininity to the Chinese version of creation. Legend has it that Nü Wa was a goddess with a human head and a serpent body, who could undergo seventy transformations in a single day. Here we detect the subtle hint of female changeability and the interplay of the female sex and the serpent, which calls to mind Eve and the Serpent. But Nü Wa was the archetype of the benevolent female Deliverer and Life-Giver who saved Man and his universe. On the opposite extreme is the Goddess Ba, a daughter of the Yellow Emperor, the goddess of drought whose extreme heat brought disaster to men, beasts, and crops alike, who was thus the Destroyer and the Harbinger of Death. Then there is the poignant legend of Hou Yi and his beautiful wife Chang E who both were gods in exile on earth. Hou Yi was a master archer who shot down nine of the ten suns that were roaming the sky, thus saving humankind from scorching heat. His heroic deed was rewarded by the Goddess Xi Wang Mu with a magic potion which would enable any mere mortal to fly heavenward. Chang E selfishly took all of the heavenly ambrosia and flew all the way to the moon. Here the story has two different endings. In one version the beauty was turned into an

ugly toad; in another, she still remains the same Chang E but leads a very lonely and boring existence on the moon by herself, except for the company of a white rabbit. Regret and loneliness slowly eat her heart away.

Thus in Nü Wa we have the Chinese counterpart of the Life-Giving Great Goddess Mother, in the combination of Ba and Chang E, we have the archetypal female Destroyer-Deceiver—selfish, transgressing, unredeemed, and untrustworthy.

Fear of female sexuality created superstitious practices among primitive people even in pre-historic times. According to the *Shan Hai Jing*, during the time of Zhuan Xu, the great grandson of the Yellow Emperor, who ruled the heavens and earth after his great grandfather, a law decreed that all women on the streets, upon encountering men, had to yield and hide; otherwise, they would be dragged into the market-place to be exorcised of the demon in a bell-ringing ceremony by a witch doctor. "Thus the poor women after being chastened like this, would be much more alert, and afterwards whenever they saw men, they would avoid men like the plague."[6]

Mythology and folklore, in the oral tradition, reflect a people's collective consciousness of beliefs and superstitions. Zhuan Xu's law set the tone of primordial fear of and bias against women for recorded Chinese history. When Confucius and his followers prevailed in the 5th century B.C., the first and foremost Chinese teacher and philosopher conceived a sophisticated scheme of man's ethical relations to his fellow beings. In this scheme, woman is to assume an inferior and inessential role, to be treated with contemptuous tolerance and condescending benevolence.

One of Confucius' most quoted sayings on womanhood equates women with *xiaoren*, or men of lowly character and small mind. "It is only men of lowly character and women who are hard to deal with. If you're too close to

them, they become difficult; if you distance yourself from them, they complain."[7] In Confucian ethics, female sexuality and charm are the things that one should be constantly cautioned against. On the way of proper conduct, he warns: "To avoid gossip, to detach oneself from female temptation, to disregard material goods, but to esteem virtue, this is the advice for a man of ethics."[8] On the right way of a gentleman, Confucius admonishes: "There are three restraints for a gentleman: when he is young and immature, he should guard against female sexuality; when he reaches adulthood and is robust, he should guard against getting into fights; when he is old and feeble, he should guard against getting greedy."[9] Notwithstanding his sagacious warnings against the snares of womanhood and sexuality, Confucius entertains no illusion about human nature; he realizes that the desire for woman, like the desire for food, is innate, nevertheless, he laments: "I have not met a man who loves virtue as much as he loves woman."

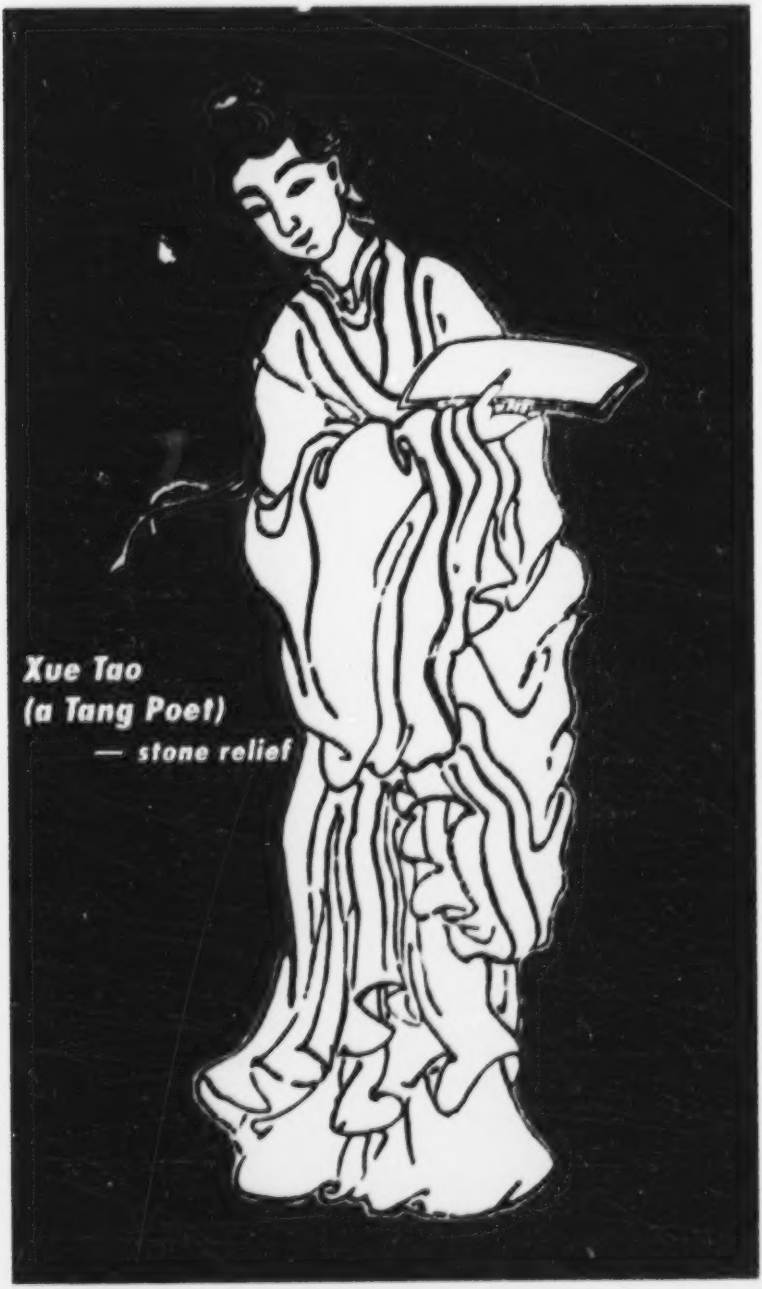
Confucianism, though not a religion, ruled China for more than two thousand years, permeating the very fiber of society. As an applied philosophy and way of life, it inevitably exerted influence on the national psyche and literary consciousness. Women, according to Confucian tenets, were to assume the submissive and unobtrusive roles of daughter, wife, and mother. In these roles, self-sacrifice, devotion, chastity, and obedience are the acclaimed womanly virtues as well as duties. While sexual licentiousness for man in a polygamous culture is legitimized and endorsed by social sanction, any sexual misconduct or indulgence by a woman is condemned. The adage, "of all evils, sexual lewdness is the worst," usually applies to woman only. Therefore it is no accident that the negative image of woman in literature is by and large that of woman of enormous sexual appeal whose compelling bewitchment induces

man's doom and downfall.

Positive Image: Theory of Chastity and Sacrifice — Sutteeism

A positive image of woman as beneficial and propitious to man's worldly progression appears frequently in Chinese popular tales, folklore, and opera. The vast body of Chinese romances and love stories largely centers around the love and pursuit of an individual scholar in search of *gongming* (fame and fortune). In popular prose fiction, which first appeared during the Tang dynasty but did not flourish until the Ming and Qing dynasties, the genre of romance and love stories is known as "tales of *caizi* and *jiaren*" or "tales of talented scholars and beautiful women." Tales in this genre usually have similar plots, with slight variations, of an aspiring scholar in search of *gongming* by successfully taking part in the examination system, thus gaining the hand of the beautiful lady, who may have befriended and loved him while he was down and out.

Woman plays a rather large and important role in these romances and also accounts for, to a great extent, the complexity and development of the plot. The two possible developments of the plot usually result from the treatment the woman (*jiaren*) receives from the man (*caizi*), thus resulting in either a tragic or happy ending to the story. The talented scholar, having achieved *gongming*, may remain faithful to his lady and consummate his love in marriage and live happily ever after with his beloved; or he may betray his intended and marry instead the daughter of the Prime Minister or some other richly dowered young lady of exalted family, while his beloved languishes in poverty awaiting his return from the capital. Popular tales, folklore, and Chinese opera abound with stories of these time honored themes, with an occasional subplot of courtesans



Xue Tao
(a Tang Poet)
— stone relief

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with golden hearts thrown in for good measure. Tales such as "Du Shiniang," *Yesou Puyan*, *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, *Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan*, and *Yu Jiaoli*, are but a few examples.

Ping Shan Leng Yan of the Qing dynasty typifies the *caizi jiaren* romance with a happy ending. The title is made up of the names of the four leading characters, two talented scholars and two beautiful ladies with talent — Ping Ruheng, Shan Dai, Leng Jiangxue, and Yan Baihan. The plot develops predictably, an intertwining of literary contests, mistaken identities, chance encounters, minor villainous scheming, poetic repartee, and other devices, and ends with the two couples in happy unions with the Emperor's personal blessings. The significant feature of this romance perhaps lies in the portrayal of two beautiful ladies whose poetic talents far surpass those of the two male scholars. Only due to the interference of external conditions were their literary achievements surpassed by men.[10] The author of *Ping Shan Leng Yan* apparently agrees with this assertion. In this delightful romance, the two heroes, Ping Ruheng and Yan Baihan, set the example of the ideal *caizi:* they who do not feel threatened by woman's intellect and scholarship, but are rather inspired and encouraged to seek higher goals in life by attaining success in the world of *gongming* in order to be deserving mates of the two talented beauties. This book clearly refutes the sentiment that "it is virtuous for women not to have talent" by celebrating romantic love and talented women as the inspiration and motivating force behind men's worldly success. In this respect, this is a romance with an old theme but a modern perspective.

The more conventional *caizi jiaren* romances usually present *caizi* as the central figure with *jiaren* as one of the plunders and rewards in his conquest of *gongming*. A popular story is *Yesou Puyan* by Xia Jingqu of the Qing dynasty. This is the colorful romance of a talented

scholar who is not only well versed in the Confucian classics but has mastered the martial arts as well. In addition to these achievements, the hero, Wen Suchen, is a man of high moral principles and strict self-discipline. This male model of perfection in his adventures through life is pursued by numerous beauties of the fair sex. In the polygamous tradition of male chauvinism and feudalism Wen Suchen in the end inevitably finds himself in the ambivalent situation of having one wife and five concubines, with all six women living in blissful harmony and deep gratitude for sharing his favors. A similar romance is the *Tang Zhu Wen Zhou Biographies*, sometimes called the *Biographies of Four Caizi*, of the Ming dynasty. The leading scholar is Tang Bohu, China's answer to Don Juan or Casanova, except that Tang surpasses his Western counterparts in his literary and artistic achievements as well as his conquests of the fair sex. As befitting scholars who lived during uncertain times and could not devote their talents to serving the Emperor, the four *caizi* withdraw from the affairs of the world for self-preservation and indulge themselves in the world of wine, music, chess, poetry, women, and merrymaking. As a consummate dilettante, Tang vows to his three companions that he will acquire eight beauties as wives within a period of three months. To their utter surprise and envious admiration, he succeeds. More surprisingly, one of Tang's conquests turns out to be a nun who renounces her religious vows to join Tang's harem.

Women, in these romances of *caizi jiaren*, were treated with tolerance and condescension as pleasant ornaments in the cultivated life style of a scholar of sophistication and refinement, or as the crowning touch to a man's success in the world of *gongming*.

Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan by Wen Kang of the Qing dynasty is another book in praise of women with superior ability in the same vein of *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, but

with a different twist. This is a romance of adventure, love, *gongming* and heroic deeds. In the opening poetic stanzas of the book, the author asserts that "love and chivalry are essentially human nature" and "loyalty, filial piety, chastity, and heroic deeds are interrelated human qualities." With such lofty sentiments in mind, the author proceeds to portray his ideal heroine, The Thirteenth Sister (Shisanmei), whose beauty and mastery of martial arts gains her legendary renown as an admirable female knight-errant, punishing evils and righting wrongs during her many dramatic adventures. During one of those undertakings, she saves the hero, An Ji, a reticent, cowardly non-entity of an aspiring scholar, from impending death. That a heroine of such superior attributes and dynamism in the end consents to be part of a *ménage à trois* as a second wife of An Ji, regrettably illustrates the fact that even with woman presented in a positive image, the author cannot transcend the trite and conventional view, in patriarchal society, that superior woman still should play second fiddle to mediocre man.

Jing Hua Yuan by Li Ruzhen of the Qing dynasty earnestly goes beyond *Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan* in advocating woman's justified position in society. This is a book of talented ladies in picturesque adventures in strange lands with strange creatures, in the genre of *Gulliver's Travels* and Homer's *Odyssey*. Though the fictional fantasies it presents are at times tiresome and ludicrous, as a literary work it is significant in the social issues it presents.

Jing Hua Yuan may be credited as one of the first books to advocate women's right to be treated as men's equals. The author realized in his time that this was an impossibility, and thus he created imaginary kingdoms such as the Land of the Amazons, the Land of Black Teeth, and the Land of Gentleman, where women take active part in all social, literary, and political activities

Shisanmei
— heroine of the Qing novel Ernü Yingxiong Zhuan

as men's equal partners. As utopian literature, *Jing Hua Yuan* occupies a unique position in Chinese literature as an unabashed protest against conventional ills, such as foot-binding, arranged marriages, and polygamy, as social evils which victimize women.

Women presented in a positive light and/or as victimized by either man or society or both abound in tales and prose fiction from the Ming dynasty. *Xingshi Hengyan* by Feng Menglong is a collection of popular folklore and short stories in the colloquial language. The common feature of these tales is their moral messages. There are tales of loyalty and virtuous womanhood, of good deeds and rewards, of revenge and retribution, of moral dissipation and subsequent ruin. Throughout most of the stories women are depicted in black and white hues, either as paragons of virtue, loyalty, and chastity or as villainesses of venom and destruction. The story of "The Oil Peddler and the Courtesan" tells the love story of the proverbial prostitute with a golden heart who falls for a lowly peddler and brings him felicity, prosperity, and even family reunion. The story of Zhen Duoshou and his wife illustrates that womanly virtues of devotion, loyalty, and chastity move even the gods and result in Zhen's ulcerous skin being miraculously cured. Another example of wifely virtue is the story of Bai Yuniang whose vow of chastity and unwavering faith unites her with her husband after twenty years, and brings them recognition from the imperial court and the granting of royal titles; still another example of a virtuous wife is the story of Gu Dusheng whose wife single-handedly helps him triumphantly to gain *gongming*. Other popular tales of virtuous women who were positive forces in men's lives but were ruthlessly betrayed by wayward men abound in collections such as *Poan Jingqi* and *Jingu Qiguan*.

All the above mentioned tales present women as a positive force in men's lives. The virtues of chastity,

loyalty, faith, and devotion are uniformly and emphatically commended. Chastity, self-abnegation, sexual abstinence, and the affirmation of the moral principle "a good woman does not serve two husbands" are especially highly regarded as the quintessence of virtuous womanhood. On the matter of chastity, the author of *Poan Jingqi*, Ling Mengchu of the Ming dynasty, said, "Some things are not fair. If a man dies, and the widow remarries, she is considered unchaste, ill-reputed, doing something quite inconceivable, and criticized by all; but if a man's wife dies, he can remarry, buy a few concubines, commit all sorts of mischief, completely forget the dead, and nobody would criticize any of this. As for the living, if a woman has any extramarital affairs, it is considered an ugly scandal, but a man can betray his wife and go whoring, without being considered to have done anything terrible. Thus women are to be pitied and men have become more licentious."[11]

This protest against the double moral standards, seen against the backdrop of *caizi jiaren* romances in which aspiring talented scholars are invariably rewarded with more than one wife as the crowning touch of their worldly success, foretells a changing perspective on women's status as full-fledged human beings. In the late Qing period, in novels like *Niehai Hua* by Zeng Pu and *The Travels of Lao Can* by Liu E, women are treated as admirable heroines on their own terms, no longer merely as long-suffering victims or as inconsequential embellishments in man's world of conquest and plunder.

In the literary genre of *caizi jiaren* stories, love, personified by the beautiful woman, though countenanced as a delightful adornment to the scholar's refined life style, is nevertheless not acclaimed for its own sake. The ideal Confucian scholar is one who equips himself diligently for contests in the field of *gongming*. The triumph of *gongming* does not only mean success in the mundane pursuit of fame and fortune, but more impor-

tantly and significantly, in the patriarchal tradition, it brings glory to the family name and thereby pays tribute to all past ancestors. Love, no matter how aesthetically appealing to an accomplished scholar, is not to be applauded as an end in itself. It is, to a certain extent, to be extolled for its pragmatic aspect, as a virtuous and beauteous *jiaren* would not only complete the scholar's life but would also be a vehicle to bring forth future heirs, preferably male, to ensure the continuation of the family name and further success in gaining *gongming*, thereby winning still further glory for the family name and the memory of all bygone ancestors.

Romantic love, which has been celebrated, lamented, and defined by poets and writers throughout the ages, has little room in the Buddhist-Confucian tradition as mere emotional gratification and individual fulfillment. Love as a prelude to marriage and within the framework of marriage was the socially accepted norm. Illicit love or love with intense passion and physical attraction, or love as an individual emotional need, were disparaged and condemned. Yet in any given social milieu, there are always conscious departures from the accepted norms. Books such as *Six Chapters from A Floating Life, The Romance of the Western Chamber,* and *Yulihun* are remarkable for their daring exaltation of romantic love, not merely as a means for procreating heirs or as part of a *caizi jiaren* refined accomplishments, but as the most fundamental human bond between a man and a woman.

The book *Yulihun* by Xu Zhenya of the Qing dynasty is an example of such heterodoxy. The tragic and inexorable love between an obscure savant and a talented young widow is told through a series of letters and poems exchanged between the ill-starred lovers. The slow-moving plot is heart-rending, not because of any external evil forces in the form of forbidding parents, evil officials, or lecherous overlords who prevent the love

from being consummated, but due to the lovers' slavish adherence to the unseen yet prevailing Confucian moral code. The only villain in the story is the heroine's widowhood. Here the code "a good woman does not serve two husbands" exerts its full force. Though short of advocating the Hindu Practice of Sutteeism — a widow's physical immolation upon her husband's death — this code in reality advocates the widow's emotional immolation. The furious and impassioned love between the lovers, at times bordering on the perverse and pathological, brings the heroine to a tragic end in self-willed death, and a moral triumph for the hero, who dies a revolutionary's death. The hero's last act of heroism is paying tribute to the woman he has loved and in compliance with her last wish "to make something out of his life." The fact that the hero sublimates his magnificent obsession to a higher level of love for his country is a clear indication of the author's acquiescence to the Confucian adage "to die a weighty death as heavy as Mount Tai, not as light as a feather."

Love outside the realm of propriety and social acceptance is an ill wind that blows nothing but agony and woe to the lovers. But even love within the framework of social sanction, legitimized by marriage, still could bring suffering and pain to lovers. Such is the story of *Six Chapters from a Floating Life* by Shen Fu of the Qing dynasty. According to Dr. Lin Yutang, the heroine Yun is the most lovable woman in all Chinese literature. This is the poignant love story of Yun and her husband Sanbai whose passion in life is not the worldly pursuit of *gongming* but to lead a gracious life of simple beauty and artistic refinement. Yet through an unfortunate interplay of circumstances and misunderstandings in which Yun's intellect and literacy play a calamitous part, their modest wish is not to be had. Banished from the parental household by her in-laws who frown upon a woman with talent and intellectual ability, Yun suf-

fers in poverty and illness and succumbs to an early death. Sanbai, unlike heroes in *caizi jiaren* romances, values his simple life of beauty and art with Yun more than the philistine pursuit of fame and fortune. In this aspect, Shen Sanbai is more akin to Jia Baoyu of *Dream of Red Mansions*. Yun, the ideal woman and wife, during their short happy life together, serves not only as companion, comforter, and soul mate to Sanbai, but more vitally as an inspiration to the sheer poetic cadence of a life lived in love and harmony. After tragedy strikes, a bereaved Sanbai laments: "For a woman, it is indeed a universal truth that not to have talent is virtue."

If both the gods and the Sage were jealous of romantic lovers and punished them with sorrow and woe, then the lovers in the *Romance of the Western Chamber* fortunately escaped their wrath. The love story of Zhang Junrui and Cui Yingying appears in different versions in folklore and opera. The version by Wang Shifu of the Yuan dynasty is quite revolutionary not only in its realistic treatment of love as intense passion and physical attraction but also in the fact that it gently condones premarital sex by allowing the lovers a happy ending in wedded bliss. Zhang Junrui is a budding scholar who falls helplessly in love with the young beauty Cui Yingying when he encounters her in a Buddhist monastery. To him, the object of love takes on a divine quality; she looks like "Guanyin or the diva of the South Sea" whose apparition drives him "half mad" and whose "parting glance is like that of a fairy queen on her way home to her divine abode."[12]

The book is also notable for the author's unabashed description of the happy tipsy state of being in love in divine terms. Throughout the story, Zhang Junrui frequently alludes to classic tales of mortals who enjoyed celestial bliss with divas and fairies. This encounter makes the scholar delay his search for fame and fortune

in the capital. Only after the discovery of the affair by Yingying's mother is the scholar goaded into resuming his search for worldly success. In *Romance of the Western Chamber*, love in its emotional as well as physical aspects is celebrated on its own merits. To Zhang Junrui, as well as to Jia Baoyu and Shen Sanbai, love in its pure and most fundamental sense is life-sustaining without any utilitarian implications. Zhang Junrui's search for *gongming* is merely acquiescence to parental admonishing.

Love for a woman has its ennobling influence on classic lovers such as Sanbai, Zhang Junrui and the two talented savants in *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, guiding them either to seek worldly success or to attain a better quality of life. Yet it is still on the level of mundane ephemerality. When love not only encourages, energizes, and motivates, but also inspires one to a higher consciousness and transcendental awareness of the very essence of existence, then it takes on a sublime and mystical quality as in the case of Dante for Beatrice, or in the case of Jia Baoyu in *Dream of Red Mansions*. If *Journey to the West* can be interpreted as Everyman's search for self-fulfillment and the attainment of higher consciousness after overcoming sensual temptations, then the *Dream of Red Mansions* can be defined as one man's conscious indulgence of and dependence on the world of the senses and his gradual realization of its vanity and illusions. According to Horace Walpole, for a man who lives with his feelings, life is tragic. For Jia Baoyu, who interprets life largely through his senses, life with all its capriciousness and unpredictability is essentially tragic. In this tragedy, woman's lot plays an important yet victimized role. To Baoyu, all men are inferior and dirty creatures who prey on women. Women are superior in intellect and sensitivity, better in nature, yet brutalized by men. Due to his deep and non-discriminating love for the fair sex, personified by the maids, sis-

Baoyu and Daiyu (Black Jade) in intimate conversation
— from a Qing edition of Dream of Red Mansions

ters, and cousins, his world view is largely that of the females: passive, reticent, and non-aggressive. He detests the philistine pursuit of *gongming* as vulgar and materialistic. He flatly professes that "to have the love of all the girls, even if it means giving up a career, is well worth it."[13] For him, to be able to transcend the temptations of *gongming* is the first criterion of a refined human being. Yet to indulge in the love and beauty of his female companions is quite logical and sensible to him. From a transcendental perspective, fame and fortune as well as love and beauty all belong to the world of the senses, equally fickle and ephemeral, and therefore to be distrusted and repudiated. Here lies the tragic paradox of Jia Baoyu who withdraws from one ephemeral world into another, similarly temporal world. Only when he rises above both the world of the feelings and the world of the senses does he gain ultimate salvation. And in Daiyu, he finds both his Teacher and Redeemer. According to Lu Taiyu, Baoyu never regards Daiyu as an ordinary beauty, but says that she "looks like a goddess." The reason Baoyu prefers Daiyu to Baozhai is because only "Daiyu can provide catharsis, sublimation, and awakening of Baoyu's soul."[14] In modern terminology, Baoyu finds in Daiyu the ideal "soul mate." As soul mate, Daiyu inspires him to a higher understanding of the ephemeral nature of the world of the senses, including that of love by the following mythical, Zen-like questioning: "If Baozhai loves you, so what? If she does not love you, so what? If she loved you before, but she does not love you now, so what? If she loves you now, but she won't love you later on, so what? If you love her, but she does not love you, so what? If you don't love her, but she wants to love you, so what?"[15] In this Socratic probing, Daiyu pinpoints the unpredictable and helpless nature of the reality of the senses and feelings. Dante has his Beatrice to guide him heavenward; Baoyu has his Black Jade (Daiyu) to in-

spire him to a more profound awareness of the tragic essence of life, without which, in the Buddhist context, no soul can complete its worldly journey consciously and triumphantly.

From Du Shiniang to Shan Dai, to Shisanmei, to Daiyu, whether she is a virtuous wife, or talented beauty, or golden-hearted courtesan, or valiant female knight-errant, or the soul mate who is, in Goethe's words: "the eternal feminine that draws us upward," woman as a positive image in Chinese literature embraces a wide variety of mandates and roles which, to a large extent, all call for moral infallibility as the foremost prerequisite of principled womanhood.

Negative Image: *Huoshui*-ism

Ambivalent feelings toward female sexuality and physical attraction were deeply rooted in humankind's primordial cultural patterns. Most primitive societies had superstitions regarding woman's pregnancy and menstruation. Even today, in many aboriginal and primitive tribes, menstruating women are kept apart and not allowed to have contact with or to cook for men. The Indians of Costa Rica believe that a woman pregnant for the first time can be infectious and cause death.[16] The ancient Chinese believed that in order to gain longevity and to cultivate the mythical power of Daoism, man had to purify himself by sexual abstinence. And menstrual blood, the symbol of woman's sexuality and fertility, was deemed as repellent and potently evil, able to destroy the sorcery and shamanism of practising Daoists. The heroic romance *Fengshen Yanyi* abounds with stories of this belief. These primal fears and superstitions translated collective consciousness into aversion and/or ambivalence toward the female sex in general. Literary works portraying woman in a negative image were replete with destructive femmes fatales who wrought havoc in men's lives and

left death and devastation in their paths.

According to the *Chronicles of Kingdoms of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty*, the first three dynasties in Chinese history fell through calamities brought on by women. The Xia dynasty's fall was due to Meixi; the fall of the Shang, due to Daji, recorded in the fictional account of *Fengshen Yanyi*; and the Zhou fell because of Baosi. Legend has it that when the Zhou dynasty came to its tenth king, Xun, children's songs were circulating in the countryside foretelling the fall of the dynasty through a woman. Then a court lady-in-waiting who had been pregnant for forty years suddenly gave birth to a female child. The length of pregnancy and the origin of conception partook of supernatural overtones when it was known that she had become pregnant by stepping on the trail of the saliva of a dragon. The king became alarmed at the ill omen and ordered the baby drowned. But the baby was saved by a flock of birds — an interesting parallel to the Western concept of the stork being the bird of birth. When the next king, You, came to power, he took as his favorite consort Baosi, who turned out to be the baby girl who was assumed to have been drowned at birth, but had been saved by the birds and raised by a peasant. The girl grew up to be an irresistible beauty. King You was a ruthless, cruel, debauched ruler, whose obsession with Baosi only deepened his degeneracy. He banished his queen, exiled his crown prince, and surrounded himself with fawning retainers and courtiers. But his final ruination came when, in order to bring a smile to the face of his beloved, he had the battle smoke signal raised to summon his unsuspecting feudal lords, thus losing their trust and respect. When he did finally need their help, he found himself in the same predicament as the boy who cried wolf once too often. The fall of the Western Zhou dynasty was through the last king's infatuation for a woman whose very birth spelled doom.[17]

According to folk legends, the common features of Meixi, Daji, Baosi, the three femmes fatales who brought down China's first three dynasties, are extraordinary beauty, strong sexual attraction, evil nature, and supernatural origins. They all came into existence as beings possessed by the spirits of foxes, demons and dragons. With their compelling female charms and sexuality they enticed the kings to wanton deeds, dissipation, and extreme cruelty, which in turn caused each dynasty's final destruction. Stories of the three femmes fatales were recited throughout history to illustrate the potential danger and catastrophe of female charm and sex; hence the popular expression *nühuo* or "womanly plague," and the saying that "woman is *huoshui*" or "woman is deluge."

The story of Xishi illustrates the same sentiments.[18] Goujian, the King of Yue, was conquered and held prisoner by Fuchai, the King of Wu. Through the schemes of his clever minister, Goujian set a trap by sending the great beauty Xishi to his conqueror Fuchai. Fuchai's counsellor Wu Yuan (also known as Wu Zixu) warned the King: "I have heard that the Xia dynasty fell through Meixi, that the Shang fell because of Daji, and Zhou fell because of Baosi. Beauties are things that bring down kingdoms. Therefore Your Majesty should not accept the King of Yue's offer of the great beauty Xishi."[19] The King's answer spoke for men of all generations: "Love of beauty is a common human trait."[20] The King accepted Xishi and loved her. Before long, he lost his kingdom.

Whether Xishi was the direct cause of Fuchai's downfall, history does not give a clear answer. But the story of Xishi is just another illustration of the pitfalls and perdition the female allurement begets. As negative literary image, woman was depicted not only as an obstruction between man and his worldly kingdom, but also as standing between man and his heavenly aspira-

tion. *Journey to the West* or *Monkey* illustrates man's struggle for spiritual enlightenment amidst legions of hazards and obstacles, not the least of which come as female temptation.

Journey to the West or *Monkey* by Wu Chengen of the Ming dynasty has been regarded as a classic combination of picturesque novel and folk epic, a pilgrim's progress of the Monk Tripitaka accompanied by the roguish Monkey to bring back the sacred scriptures from the West, in other words, India, the home of Buddhism. In a way it is an Eastern counterpart of the search for the Holy Grail.

If *Journey to the West* can be interpreted in terms of psychoanalysis, it is about the Pilgrim's progress of an individual's psyche, or the mental progression through trials and tribulations of Everyman, who, in turn, is the microcosm of humanity. Monkey is the superego, which in the psychic apparatus represents the rational part that dominates and provides guidance to the ego. The ego, personified by the Monk Tripitaka, being the part of the psychic apparatus that experiences and reacts to the outside world of the social and physical environment, and checks the id, represented by Sandy, the psychic part that is instinctive, modified by both ego and superego. The libido, sexual and instinctive in nature, store of erotic impulses, is dramatized by Pigsy.

During the journey, Tripitaka, the Everyman, and the entourage of his entire psychic apparatus are repeatedly subjected to numerous trials and entrapments by gods, demons, spirits, and monsters who frequently take the form and allegory of female temptation. Female temptation is manifest mainly in sexuality, which could prove lethal to the Pilgrim, who seeks mental as well as spiritual ascension. The opening poetic couplets of chapter 24 give the following warning: "Sexuality is a sword that hurts the body. Indulgence in it will bring calamity! Young beauties all dolled up [to seduce]. But they

are more vicious than female demons. You only have one body as capital. So be careful to take good care of it."[21]

For the Pilgrim to attain ultimate spiritual exaltation, "to take good care of one's body" by sexual abstinence, is not enough; he also has to rid himself of all sensual desires and cravings, which in the Buddhist context, are the cause of man's worldly indulgence and eventual rebirth. This concept is borne out in chapter 14 when the pilgrims encounter six bandits named after the six senses: Eyes, Ears, Nose, Tongue, Mind and Body. Monkey slays all six of them. The Monk, with all his human frailty and sentimentality, can not justify the killing and is saddened by it. Monkey, possessing the superego's rationality and perception, retorts: "If I don't kill them, they will kill us." Senses kill, because of the desires, mostly sensual and sexual in nature, they raise in man. Man's salvation lies in his ability to achieve transcendence and detachment.

Again and again, both gods and demons disguised in female forms challenge the pilgrims in their eternal vigilance and struggle to triumph over the hazards and pitfalls through life's journey. This happens in the episode of the Lady Skeleton (White Bone Demon) at White Tiger Mountain where the female demon is transformed into a great beauty to deceive the Monk; in the episode among the Xiliang Amazons, a country of women who detain the pilgrims for their potential function as "procreation seed" (*renzhong*); in the episode of the Biba Cave and the Scorpion Demon who snatches the Monk for sexual purposes; in the temptation by Apricot Nymph and in the tender trap by the Spider Queen and her seven sisters; in the episode of the female demon of the Bottomless Pit who disguises herself as a damsel in distress to waylay the pilgrims; and in the episode of the Rabbit Demon who is transformed into a princess to ensnare the Monk into marriage, and many more.

Throughout the journey, legions of demons and the spirits of lions, bulls, birds, peacocks, wolves, leopards, and trees take up human forms, usually those of beautiful females, and test both the body and will of the pilgrims. 14 years and 81 Herculean tasks later, the pilgrims, or the Pilgrim of the Ego, attain their goal in self-fulfillment and spiritual ascension, which would not have been possible if they had not overcome the first cardinal sin: carnal desire for the female sex.

The image of woman as negative prototype, as calamity or *huoshui*, is nowhere more manifest than in the female characters of *Water Margin* by Shi Naian of the Ming dynasty. The overall view of the book regarding the female sex is blatantly inimical and malevolent. This tale of outlaws and desperadoes treats women characters with implacable contempt and brutal indignity. Sun Shuyu in his brilliant study *The Origin, Mentality and Art of* ***Water Margin*** notes that due to the outlaws' marginal existence, female company and sexuality which would weaken the outlaws' will to survive, are perceived as cumbrous and obstructive. Women in general are portrayed as villainesses, with the young and pretty ones as lewd and wanton, the old and ugly ones as grasping and rapacious. And Pan Jinlian, who makes her first appearance here and later shows up as one of the leading characters in *Jin Ping Mei*, is only one of the adulteresses who met a bloody ending. Women in general are not to be trusted, especially the beautiful ones, either as wives or as paramours. They either become adulteresses, or murderers, or both. In their duplicity and betrayal, men meet their Nemesis and downfall: Sung Jiang has his Yan Poxi; Lu Junyi has his Jiashi; Wu Da, his Pan Jinlian; Yang Xiong, his Pan Jiaoyun; and Lei Hong, his heartless whore. All these daredevil he-men suffer one way or another in the hands of untrustworthy women, and for revenge put their predators to violent, and in the author's view, jus-

tifiable death. Women not only ensnare and deceive men, but also alienate men from other men. Since, in the liminal and hazardous existence of the outlaws, friendship and camaraderie could mean the difference between life and death, women, synonymous with treachery and catastrophe, are deemed taboo and therefore to be removed at all cost. Even women legitimized in marriage are considered impediments to men on the run. The two women portrayed in a somewhat positive light, are Big Sister-in-law Gu (Gu Dasao), nicknamed the Tigress, and Sun Erniang, nicknamed the Female Demon. Both women are portrayed as extremely hideous and totally lacking in female charm. The only beautiful woman who is not a villainess is Hu Sanniang. But the author rewards her decency by marrying her off to a short, ugly, and lustful bandit, who is not one of the outstanding heroes of the book.

In this bleak world of outlaws, women are portrayed as burdens, as rivals, as nemeses, and/or as downright enemies. Instead, men seek comfort and solace in food, liquor, and living dangerously and in each other's company. Even in the macho world of cowboys and Indians of American westerns, women are not treated as uncivilly and brutally. Needless to say, as far as women are concerned, the world of *Water Margin* is light years away from the gallantry and chivalry of the *chanson de geste,* such as the *Chanson de Roland, El Cid,* or the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table of Western medieval literature.

The image of woman as concupiscent and a villainous instrument of dissipation and destruction emerges again in *Jin Ping Mei*. This story of the sexual escapades of Ximen Qing and his harem of lecherous women has been considered by many as the foremost pornographic book in Chinese literature, and the female lead Pan Jinlian as the foremost nymphomaniac woman among all fictional characters. Yet *Jin Ping Mei* should

not be interpreted as anti-woman per se since it treats most of its male protagonists in the same unsavory vein as its female ones. It is true that women are depicted as lewd, whorish, promiscuous, and morally unscrupulous, yet under most circumstances they are manipulated and abused by men as mere sexual instruments. Thus this book, in its outrageous and explicit and at times comical portrayal of sexual acts, can almost be said to be an unwitting advocate of women's liberation. Traditionally, women in classic Chinese literature mostly appear as asexual, uninitiated, or even as anti-sexual. Since Confucian ethics dictated temperance and self-restraint, any uncurbed expression of carnal desires or even of emotions was regarded as a breach of conduct. A woman's goodness was measured by her ability to control and conquer the weaknesses of the flesh, thus, the theory of Chastity and Sacrifice. Yet *Jin Ping Mei* presents its gallery of female rogues as sexually wolfish and as insatiable as the males, if not more so. In this aspect, this book grants women equality with men in their equivalent capacity for depravity and self-indulgence.

Ximen Qing's death through sexual dissipation should be viewed as much as an inevitable and natural outcome of a life spent in pleasure-seeking as his undoing by the female sex fiend Pan Jinlian. The story of Ximen Qing has a familiar echo in the story of He Daqing, in the collection *Xingshi Hengyan,* whose sexual frolics take him to a horde of salacious nuns. After three months in sensual captivity, he dies of physical exhaustion. Whether whores or nuns, women with unchecked sexual appetites spell doom for men.

Wickedness in woman not only results from her sexual wantonness, but also comes from her cruelty, her being the female tyrant. Woman's inhumanity to man is the theme of the book *Xingshi Yingyuan Zhuan* by Pu Songling of the Qing dynasty. This book can be de-

scribed as the longest and most elaborate story of a henpecked husband, tyrannized and terrorized by two wives who are reincarnated spirits the man had wronged in a previous life. The two wives, playing the oppressors and slave masters, employ various blood-curdling means to torture the husband, who is totally resigned to his implacable fate. In this improbable drama of karma and revenge, if these two shrews have any redeeming feature, it is that their brutality finally drives the husband to seek deliverance by turning to Buddhism. Wicked wives can drive a husband to religion; they also can drive a husband to certain death by offering bad advice, as in the story of Fang De, in the collection *Xingshi Hengyan Zhuan* (chapter 30), whose evil wife advises him to kill his benefactor, leading to his own death by a mysterious knight errant.

A poem in the story admonishes men to be wary of evil women as follows:

Sword inside the mouth of tiger,
Sting on the tail of a snake,
Both are deadly indeed,
But not as venomous as a woman's heart.[22]

Woman as femme fatale, as *huoshui,* as temptress, as oppressor, and as torturer, either through her sexual enticement or evil manipulation, causes man immeasurable woes, both in moral degeneracy and physical destruction.

The 1930s

The 1930s have been considered by many as the Golden Age of Modern Chinese Literature in which some of the modern literary giants, such as Lu Xun, Lao She, Mao Dun, Ba Jin, and others flourished and produced remarkable works of long lasting value. The May 4th Movement of 1919 marked the beginning of the modern Chinese Renaissance, when Western ideas, phi-

losophies, literature, and science were introduced on a large scale. The Western concepts of individualism, human rights, equality, and the feminist movement, together with the Ibsenian New Woman and Tolstoy's socialist humanism, were the prevailing rage of the time. The writers of the 1930s were increasingly conscious of the inequities and indignities that Chinese women had suffered, and most of them became ardent champions of women's rights. Women writers and intellectuals gained ready acceptance and credibility. Writers such as Ding Ling, Bing Xin, Lu Yin, Ling Shuhua, and Su Xuelin made a significant literary impact.

Overall, literary works of the 1930s present woman as a positive image. Women were either depicted as individual rebels against social conventionalism and family bondage, or as fervent revolutionaries against feudalistic ideas and practices. They were regarded as men's equals not only in intellect, but in courage and ability as well. Even self-imposed spinsterhood gained a certain respectability. Thus the image of woman as Calamity or as Femme Fatale was rare in 1930s literature. Presented mostly in a favorable vein, with genuine sympathy and appreciation, were the New Women of the new era, usually beings of strength, fiery passions, and lofty ideals. Also, they were defiantly independent and daringly free. These irrepressible free spirits were abundant in the works of Ba Jin, Mao Dun and Ding Ling.

Lu Xun, the foremost writer, in his essays and other nonfictional works voices his loyal and impassioned support of the New Woman. Throughout his writings, he attacks the hypocrisy of the male-oriented society which treats women with contempt and disdain, yet secretly or openly enjoys the object of contempt. He even defends prostitutes, whose very existence he asserts should be interpreted in terms of supply and demand. In his article "About Women," he sees the abuse and mistreatment that women suffered throughout the ages: "In a

society based upon ownership of private property, women are regarded as private property, as merchandise. There are all kinds of strange phenomena existing in different countries and religions, which look upon women as unlucky creatures, thus intimidating them into enslaved submission, and taking them as playthings for the upper class. Just as today there are gentlemen who scoff at women's luxury and at the same time secretly enjoy the 'sexual bare-leg culture.'"[23] In the article "After Nora Left," he sharply comments on the Ibsenian heroine who left a condescending and sexist husband to seek a new life, that if social reform in general does not occur, the newly freed Nora would only be struggling in the old social quagmire without much prospect of improving her lot. In order to make a living, she might even have to resort to the oldest profession known to her sex.

Lu Xun is the true women's rights champion in the tradition of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and other great social humanists. What he wrote on the fall of Leifeng Tower, the Tower which was reputed to have imprisoned the folklore heroine the White Snake who invoked heavenly wrath for her love affair with Scholar Xu, speaks his true feeling for woman as social victim. To him the Tower symbolizes the male-oriented society's prejudice against and persecution of women as scapegoat. Thus the fall of the Tower is a welcome event which is long overdue.

The New Woman at the crossroads of the old and the new, in order to have a total break with traditional stereotypes, at times indulges in psychological over-compensation, like Miss Mei in Mao Dun's *Rainbow* whose "only ambition is to overcome environment, to overcome fate; and over the years, her only purpose in life is to overcome her own abundant femininity and motherly instincts."[24] Traditional concepts of femininity and motherly instinct are passivity and self-denial. The New

Woman in Miss Mei wants to put an end to all that. Her strong conviction of freedom and personal worth made her defiantly escape from an unhappy marriage to seek a new life. Even in sexual awareness, she is a daring and unabashed departure from the old prototype of chastity and sexual-abstinence: "If God gave me a good body, is it just for other people's enjoyment? I want to enjoy it, too. I'm not going to be passive."[25] Yet, in her career as a teacher, her beauty and independent spirit are regarded as threatening to men and women alike; she does not find happiness or fulfillment. But the New Woman is determined to be self-reliant and free: in her letter to one of her suitors, she writes: "I've made up my mind, I want to be alone... I still have strong will power. I prefer to walk on the path I've chosen for myself."[26]

In her chosen path of active independence, she goes to Shanghai to become a revolutionary. Political activities add new dimension and meaning to her life, yet she cannot be said to be happy. Never short of male attention or suitors, she was only in love with two impossible men in her life. One was a tubercular weakling who dies young, the other a hard unfeeling revolutionary who is more in love with ideology than with women. Perhaps the words of one of Miss Mei's suitors best describe her: "Here is a lady, whose beauty and intelligence could intoxicate all men, whose strong will could make all men her playthings, her new ways of thinking could break all bondage, and her newly awakened will to live make her actively pursue all pleasures. She is a New Woman, she knows how to open a most comfortable and pleasant path for herself, yet she is not good for anybody, not even for herself."[27]

The New Woman, in her self-assertion, transcends the status of being merely an item of personal effects to man; yet in her new found freedom, she extends her demands and expectations of life as well as of men, and therein lies her inevitable disappointment.

Disappointed, yet still defiantly expectant, the New Woman makes repeated appearances in the works of Ba Jin. In the Epilogue of the 1931 edition of *Family*, Ba Jin said that the book was his version of "*J'accuse* against a decaying social order, under which individuals' — especially young people's — happiness was sacrificed, because of traditional practices, social conformism, superstitions, and unchallenged parental authority." In *Family*, part one of the *Torrents Trilogy*, the saga of a decadent and decaying extended family of four generations under one roof, the young, men and women alike, were victims. The older generations were the villainous tyrants. The tragedy of *Family* was not so much of the sexes as that of conflicts brought on by the generation gap between the old and the young, and the ideology gap between the antiquated and the new. In the continuous drama of struggles and intrigues, young people, especially women, tamed by unchecked parental power, either commit suicide, or became resigned to lifelong unhappiness in arranged and mismatched marriages. Of the younger generation, Juemin and Juehui are the rebels who eventually broke away from the imprisonment of family to seek a new life in the outside world. But the New Woman in Qin, their female cousin, who has been properly educated in the ideas of Tolstoy and Ibsen, symbolizes the hope, courage, and rationality of the new era. The image of woman as victim presents itself in several of the maids and minor female characters, but none more pathetic than the character of Mei, who is hopelessly in love with her cousin but is married to a man she detests and eventually dies of a broken heart and tuberculosis. TB is the much employed *deus ex machina* of exit in many works of the 1930s.

Through Qin, the author questions the lot of woman: "What is the meaning of a woman's life? To be a sexual instrument for men only? Playthings for men?"[28] The ill-starred women, maids and mistresses alike, who find themselves not in control of their own destinies, usually

lament their "treacherous fate," or the fact that they "were not born a man." Thus, "to be born a man" and "to live like a man" is the vain hope and aspiration of many of these hapless women. Lamenting "not to have been born a man" echoes the sentiments of Chinese women throughout the ages. In the long poem by Zhang Ji of the Tang dynasty entitled "Divorced Woman," the woman who was divorced by her husband because she failed to produce a male heir, laments: "It is hard to be a woman; it's better not to be born a woman." The same regret is voiced by Hui in *Spring*, part two of the *Trilogy*: "To be a woman is miserable,"[29] and again by the step-mother of Juehui: "To be a woman is inevitably to be miserable. I only wish I will not be a woman in my next life."[30] With these feelings of hopelessness and entrapment in an inescapable lot, death sometimes is the only way out. These submissive and enslaved female stereotypes are sharply contrasted in Shuying who has read Ibsen's *Doll's House*, and in Shuhua who does not believe in so-called fate. Qin and Shuying are the vivacious and high-spirited new women who dare to rise up in defiance against old traditions and prejudices. To the men who are also victims of the same social ills, though to a lesser degree, they personify both hope and inspiration. To Chen Renyun, a melancholy young man of indecisive nature, Shuying and Qin are like "shining stars which illuminated the dark night of his existence."[31]

To Chen, Shuying is "pure and beautiful. He worshipped her in secret. He even made up his mind to sacrifice his own life so that the light of the star would not be dimmed." And "the light of the star guides him to go on. It also gives him comfort and encouragement."[32]

The New Woman, in asserting her own right as a free and independent being, also proves to be man's inspiration, comrade, and ultimate salvation in his own fight

against the old decaying world.

In *Autumn*, part three of the *Torrents Trilogy*, Juemin says to Qin: "I'm grateful to you, you changed me a lot. Without your love, where would my courage come from? You are all I've got. With you I feel I'm happier than the rest of the world."[33]

Even as femme fatale as in the characters of Cao Yu's Chen Bailu in *Sunrise* and Zhou Fanyi in *Thunderstorm*, the New Woman is not without redeeming features. Both Chen Bailu and Zhou Fanyi are women of strong passions and alluring charms who wreak havoc in men's lives, yet to a large extent they are more victimized than victimizing. Of the two, Zhou Fanyi is more in the tradition of the Western concept of femme fatale of fiery passions, forceful will, with an impending sense of undoing yet defiantly unrepentant. Even though Cao Yu denies any debt to Euripides' *Phaedra*, *Thunderstorm* does bear a discernible similarity in both plot and sentiments to the former. The heroine of this four-act play is foredoomed by a hopeless and guilt-ridden love affair with her stepson Zhou Ping. To her partner in this incestuous affair, she insists: "I don't regret; I've never done anything that I regret." In order to escape from her obsession and an unbearable sense of guilt, the weakling stepson has purposely fallen in love with the family maid, who turns out to be his half-sister. This double tragedy drives Zhou Ping to suicide. Judged on the surface, Zhou Fanyi can be described as a wanton seductress who brought an innocent young man to total ruin through her own unchecked passions. Yet looked at in a larger context, the seductress and the seduced were both victims of social evils and prejudices. Cao Yu expresses his sympathy and admiration for Zhou Fanyi whom he describes as "fallen": "She has flaming passions, and an undaunted heart, she dared to break all shackles, as a caged animal struggling for its freedom... Her attraction lies in her sharp edges. She is

like a very sharp dagger, the more she loves, the more she hurts."[34]

But unlike the stereotypical femme fatale, in hurting man, Zhou Fanyi hurt herself as well, only more so. Still, in her love were devastation and death, though the time and social milieu in which she lived and loved were the controlling factors in her tragedy.

Lao She stands out among the 1930s writers not only for his humorous sarcasm, but more strikingly for his unmistakable hostility toward the women characters in his fiction. A strong sense of woman as scourge and entrapment who impedes man's progress in the world is manifest in many of his stories. In presenting woman as cannibalistic aggressor and evildoer, Lao She is more in the classic tradition of *huoshui*-ism (or calamity) than the mentality of the enlightened 1930s. In his most notable book *The Rickshaw Boy*, the heroine Tigress Lass (Hu Niu) has all the unredeemed features of the classic femme fatale: lustful, scheming, insatiable, unrelenting. This is the sad saga of a rickshaw boy who went through hell and high water to save money to buy his own rickshaw. This desire became an obsession, his sole purpose in life, a symbol of independence, self value, and dignity. Uncertain times, war, women, illness, and life's general vicissitudes are some of the malefactors that disrupted his plans. But the arch-villain of them all is the insidious and shameless Tigress Lass, the daughter of his employer. As Sun Shuyu notes in his brilliant study of *Water Margin*, the only "good women" in that book are the ones with no claim to femininity and beauty. Ugliness is considered a womanly virtue. This equation does not occur in the case of Tigress Lass who was both ugly and wicked. Or, because of her ugliness she had to resort to devious means to entrap a man, in this case, the unfortunate rickshaw boy Xiangzi. Sex played an important part in the psyche of Tigress Lass, which further deepened her wickedness.

In her demands for and enjoyment of carnal pleasures she almost put all men to shame or at least she achieved equality with men. This is an unpardonable sin in the Chinese cultural tradition, in which women were supposed to assume the role of passive, reticent, even recalcitrant sexual partners. Yet Tigress Lass was shamelessly sexual and demanding.

She trapped Xiangzi into marriage by claiming pregnancy. Xiangzi felt "ensnared, with his hands and feet bound together by iron clasps, from which he cannot escape."[35] After the wedding, he looked at his bride, and felt that "he dared not to look at her straight in the face. She seemed to be both an old and new *something*, both a girl and a woman, like a female, also like a male, looking like a human, but also like some fiendish monster! And this monster, all in red, has caught him and wants to finish him slowly. Anybody can finish him, especially this monster... who wants to hold him tightly, to suck clean all his vitality and strength. He cannot escape."[36] The above passage gives an unveiled metaphor of sexuality, or sexual acts, as cannibalism and vampirism. The echo of the Western concept that the blood-sucking vampire, in this case the lustful Tigress Lass, would cause Xiangzi's eventual downfall is unmistakable.

In his life with Tigress Lass, Xiangzi felt that "he is no longer human," but "a piece of meat. He no longer exists as himself, but as a mouse clutched in the teeth of a cat, struggling to survive."[37] And Tigress Lass' motherly caring for Xiangzi was interpreted by the author as "feeding a cow so as to milk him further." Soon the young, virile, and energetic Xiangzi was no longer so, because what he had at home was not a wife but a "blood-sucking monster."[38] Dispensing poetic justice, the author killed Tigress Lass midway through the book and had Xiangzi seduced by his next employer's wife, Mrs. Xia.

To Xiangzi, Mrs. Xia was another version of Tigress

Daiyu (Black Jade) burying flowers
— from a Qing edition of Dream of Red Chambers or Mansions

Lass, only her beauty made her more dangerous, "more to be feared." His only encounter with her got him a serious case of venereal disease.

Towards the end of the story the destruction of Xiangzi is complete, not only in his physical decline, but also in his moral degradation, his total loss of innocence. Fate, circumstances, bad times, social conditions, "old society, old systems," and so forth, all contributed to Xiangzi's downfall, but Tigress Lass was the decisive malevolent force. His plan — to build a future with and for the prostitute Fuzi, whose love might have been Xiangzi's ultimate salvation — was aborted. In fulfilling his love for Fuzi, Xiangzi would have had to transcend his life of an aimless vagabond. But Fuzi committed suicide before Xiangzi could find her. In the end the rickshaw boy realized that his life would just be like that of a homeless dog, without hope and without love. To scavenge for food to survive would be the only purpose of his life.

In the comical and at times farcical novel *Divorce*, Lao She voices similar sentiments on marriage and woman as shackles and a hindrance to man's life.

Through several characters in the book, the author attacks marriage as an institution, yet the black humor of the book lies in the fact that none of the unhappy couples ever earnestly sought divorce as a solution to their accursed and wretched life. Meanwhile they felt entrapped and lamented their miserable lot. Old Li, one of the main characters of the novel, was married to an old fashioned and uneducated woman, with whom life was tedious and banal. Li came to the sad conclusion that "all marriages are compromise. If you cannot compromise, then you would have to abolish marriage as an institution. Family is just a battlefield for man and woman and children and bugs. He hates himself for not having the courage to walk out of this filthy place. If only he could talk this out with someone who under-

stood him. Where could he find this person? Family is a swamp of fetid water, the world is a desert, there is not much to be said. All is doomed."[39] To another character, Ding Er, who blamed his alcoholism on a despairing marriage, women "are not to be trusted. When they destroy you, they do so thoroughly. For three years [of marriage], I was in the eighteenth Hell, the pits!" To old Jiu, who, unlike Ding or Old Li, married a woman who was college-educated, life was no wedded bliss either, but endless drudgery. The moral seems to be that educated or not, a woman does not a happy marriage make. With such bleakness in mind, these hapless men at times still dreamed the impossible dream. Old Li wanted "poetry" in life, wanted "a woman pure as an angel, as passionate as poetry, as happy as music."[40] This dream later became embodied in the person of the young, beautiful, and educated Mrs. Ma who was deserted by her husband. To Old Li, the young woman symbolizes all that is good and pure and innocent in life. And in the following passage she almost takes on a saintly quality. "The sun shed light on her hair, and the reflection from the water shone forth golden rays which gave a halo effect to her head, her back, her white ankle, her hair, and the light around her head, reminding him of the countryside after the rain — fresh, crisp, peaceful, innocent, and pretty; he had finally found poetry."[41]

Whether the halo-crowned innocent Mrs. Ma, or the treacherous and man-hungry Tigress Lass, Lao She's female characters dramatize the polarity of perceptions of woman as savior or destroyer. The majority of his women characters are presented as malevolent and villainous evildoers. Such women also make numerous appearances in his most ambitious novel, the trilogy *Four Generations Under One Roof.*

Conclusion

Throughout history, in both the Chinese and Western

traditions, women have been perceived by patriarchal societies in unrealistic extremism and exaggeration, in mystical as well as mythological prototypes, either as evil femmes fatales who caused Man's Fall from Grace and exile from Paradise, or as the Great Mother-Goddess, the Nü Wa who single-handedly repaired the heavenly sky, or the Madonna whose Immaculate Conception brought man's Redeemer and Savior. In China, the polarity of opinion may be summed up by the Theory of Calamity, or *huoshui*-ism, and the Theory of Chastity and Sacrifice, or Sutteeism. The dichotomy of concepts should be seen in the social milieu from which it sprang. Confucianism as a political ideology and ethical philosophy stressed social conformity, power centralization, individual restraint, and continence. Since the family served as the most fundamental and infrangible unit in the social structure, individuals', especially women's, moral obligations to family cohesion were emphasized. Submissive and subjugated individuals would better maintain social order and harmony, and consequently submissive and subjugated females would better maintain family integrity. Thus more fastidious demands were made on women's moral obligations to both family and society. The Confucian admonition for women: "When young, obey your father; in marriage, obey your husband; after your husband's death, obey your son," strikes a familiar note with the Code of Manu of India: "In childhood a woman must be subject to her father, in youth, to her husband, and when her husband is dead, to her sons. A woman must never be free of subjugation." Exacting demands easily turned into double moral standards for the sexes. Chastity, moral efficacy, saintliness, total sexual abstinence for widows or women whose husbands were absent from home, or the death ritual of Suttee were considered moral imperatives of proper conduct for women — and for women only.

The above mentioned passage from the Code of Manu, "a woman must never be free of subjugation," speaks loudly of man's fear of the female sex. Patriarchal societies chained women in social and moral constraints not so much due to women's incontinent or intractable nature, but rather due to the fear of the challenge that female sexuality presented for men. Strong sexual attraction is a test of will power, thus creating tension, dread, and feelings of repulsion and ambivalence toward the source of the attraction. Men's fear of women should not be defined in terms of women but rather in terms of the undeniable demands of their own sexuality. Yet submitting to nature's demands was viewed throughout history as the burden of the calamitous allurement of the female temptress. Great beauty poses great temptation. Thus women with great beauty were regarded with suspicion, if not imputed with moral turpitude. An official in a story in *Poan Jingqi* justifies his torture of a very talented and beautiful courtesan by explaining that "it has always been true that a woman with great beauty has no virtue."[42]

Thus female attraction and sexuality were perceived as detrimental and obstructive to man's attainment of both mundane pursuits and/or spiritual progression. The Theory of Calamity held women accountable for men's failure in self-fulfillment in both the physical and spiritual spheres, in which women were seen at best as burdens, at worst as a plague. Historical as well as fictional and mythical archetypes of the femme fatale abound in cultural traditions: the biblical Jezebel, Salome, Delilah, the Homeric Helen, Calypso, Clytemnestra, Scylla, Circe, who turned men to beasts, and the mythical Lorelei, who lured sailors to death with her siren's songs. In the Chinese tradition, Meixi, Daji, Baosi, Wenjiang, Wu Zetian, Yang Gueifei, Pan Jinlian, and others crumbled kingdoms and terminated dynasties while bringing on death and catastrophe to le-

gions of innocents. These women were reputed to be great beauties who exerted powerful evil influences over men. And men's yielding to these influences caused their eventual downfall.

Therefore, the paramount virtue for womanhood is chastity and sexual abstinence. In the Theory of Chastity and Sacrifice, or Sutteeism, woman is largely defined in terms of her function as mother, wife, and daughter; in other words, in her relationships to men, but never in her own right as an individual. In these roles, she is called upon to be self-abnegating, submissive, yet paradoxically at the same time to be the all sustaining life-generating force which motivates man's moral as well as worldly exaltation. The mother of Mencius, Liang Hong, Ban Zhao, Hua Mulan, Wang Zhaojun, and the women of Liu Xiang's *Lie Nü Zhuan* are all prototypes of self-sacrifice, loyalty, and utter devotion.

In the dichotomy of either being perceived as evil or saintly, as goddess or whore, women in patriarchal societies were not depicted or appreciated realistically, but rather as fantasies. As Sarah B. Pomeroy rightly puts it: "The mythology about women is created by men and in a culture dominated by men, it may have little to do with flesh-and-blood women."[43] Fortunately, in recent years the women's liberation movement has helped men to see women more realistically, to recognize their human qualities first, their gender only as secondary nature. Only when women are accepted in their human totality as equal partners in man's universe, in work, in pursuits, in ideals, and in aspirations, will woman be understood and defined in truthful and justifiable perspectives.

Forasmuch as woman has shouldered the burden of man's fall from Grace since the dawn of the Judeo-Christian tradition, her sharing life's tasks equitably and symbiotically with man may be his as well as

her ultimate salvation, as Elbert Hubbard (1856–1915) aptly put it in his *Epigrams*: "If it was woman who put man out of paradise, it is still woman, and woman only who can lead him back."

Notes

1. It is impossible to list the many important works on women in Greek and Roman thought. Only a few are suggested here: Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979; *Images of Women in Antiquity*, edited by Averil Cameron and Amelie Kuhrt, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983; Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986. There are a number of compilations of misogynous quotes, for example, *The Home Book of Quotations, Classical and Modern*, New York: Dodd, Mead, 1964, 9th edition; Tama Starr, *The Natural Inferiority of Women: Outrageous Pronouncements by Misguided Males*, New York: Poseidon Press, 1991.
2. *The Home Book of Quotations, Classical and Modern*, p. 2187. This book is referred to here because it contains so many quotations that reflect deep-rooted and widespread prejudices against women in the West.
3. *Old Testament*, Eccles. 7. 26. As to the Roman Catholic Church's attitudes toward women, there is the provocative work by Uta Ranke-Heinemann, *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*, translated into English by Peter Heinegg, New York: Penguin Books, 1990. Concerning women in biblical exegesis, one may read: Joan M. Ferrante, *Woman As Image in Medieval Literature*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
4. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, New York: Schocken Books, 1975, p. 98.
5. *The Home Book of Quotations*, p. 2180.
6. Yuan Ke is a leading specialist on Chinese mythology and is the author of many books on the subject. Interested readers may consult his *Gu Shenhua Xuanshi* (Selected Interpretations of Ancient Chinese Myths), Beijing: Jenmin Chubanshe, 1979; and *Gudai Zhongguo Shenhua* (Ancient Chinese Myths), Beijing: Zhonghua Bookstore, 1981. One may also read: Wang Xiaolian, *Zhongguo de Shenhua yu Chuanshuo* (Chinese

Myths and Legends), Taibei: Linking Press, first published in 1977, 8th printing in 1991. Ke Wen-li and Hou Mei-xue have translated and edited Yuan Ke's *Zhongguo Shenhua Gushi* into English, *Stories from Chinese Mythology*, Tianjin: Nankai University Press, 1991.

7. Xie Bingying, et al., eds., *Xinyi Sishu Duben* (The New Annotated Four Books), Taibei: Sanmin Bookstore, 1976, p. 225.
8. Ibid., p. 36.
9. Ibid., p. 212.
10. Xie Wuliang, *Zhongguo Funü Wenxue Shi* (History of Chinese Women's Literature), reprinted in Taibei by Zhonghua Bookstore in 1973, p. 2. Concerning double standards towards Chinese women and protests against them, one may read Lin Yutang's article "Feminist Thought in Ancient China," first published in *T'ien Hsia Monthly* in September 1935, reprinted in *Chinese Women Through Chinese Eyes*, edited by Li Yu-ning, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992.
11. Ling Mengchu, *Poan Jingqi* (Striking the Table in Amazement at the Wonders), originally published in 1628, reprinted many times.
12. Wang Shipu, *Xi Ziang Ji* (Romance of the Western Chamber), reprinted in Taibei by Wenhua, 1982, p. 7. There are several English translations of *Xi Xiang Ji*, for example, *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, by S. I. Hsiung, originally published in 1936, reissued by Columbia University Press in 1968. Another rendering with the same English title, translated and adapted by T. C. Lai and Ed Gamarekian, Hong Kong: Heinemann, 1973. The most recent rendering is *The Moon and the Zipher: The Story of the Western Wing*, ed. and trans. by Stephan H. West and Wilt T. Idema, Berkley: University of California Press, 1991. For a discussion of translations of *Xi Xiang Ji* and its predecessors into a wide range of languages (including Latin, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Manchu and Mongolian), see Wang Lina, "*Xi Xiang Ji* de Waiwen Yiben he ManMengwen Yiben," (Translations of *The Romance of the Western Chamber* into Foreign Languages and into Manchu and Mongolian), *Wenxue Yichan* (1981, No. 3), pp. 148–154.
13. Cao Xueqin, *Honglou Meng*, Taibei: Wenhua, 1977,p. 278. It is generally agreed that this is the greatest of all Chinese novels, first published in 1792. For a penetrating and scholarly analysis of this novel, see C. T. Hsia, *The Classical*

Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction, New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968. There are two complete English translations of the novel, with different versions of the title: David Hawkes and John Mitford, trans., *The Story of the Stone*, 5 vols., Penguin Books, 1973–1986; Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang, trans., A Dream of Red Mansions, 3 vols., Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1978–1980. Chi-chen Wang has an abridged translation, *Dream of Red Chamber*, first published by Twayne of New York, 1958.

14. Lu Taiyu, *Honglou Meng Renwu Lun* (A Study of Characters from Dream of Red Mansions), Taibei: Tianhua, 1979, p. 219.
15. *Honglou Meng*, Taibei: Wenhua, 1977, p. 793.
16. Stambler Sookie, comp., *Women's Liberation, Blueprint for the Future*, New York: Ace, 1970, pp. 119-120.
17. *Dong Zhou Lieguo Zhi* (Chronicles of the States during the Eastern Zhou period), reprinted by Liming Ltd. of Taibei, n.a., n.d., chapter 1.
18. Liu Yuncong (Clara Lau Wing-chung) has made a scholarly study of the development of *Huoshui-ism* in Chinese history and has arrived at the conclusion that the theory originated in Pre-Qin and became fully developed in the Western and Eastern Han Periods. She has shown that some historical works have given women credit for their contributions to family, society, and country, while others condemn beautiful women as femmes fatales. See her article "Handai Furen Yanse Wangguo Lun Zhi Fazhan — Nühuo Guannian Xinzheng de Yige Cengmian (The Development of the Theory Concerning Women's Bringing Calamities to Their Countries By Their Appearances and Words — An Aspect of the Formation of the Concept of Femmes Fatales), *Zhonghua Wenshi Luncong*, No. 50 (December 1992), Taibei, pp. 231-246.
19. *Dong Zhou Lieguo Zhi*, chapter 81.
20. Ibid., p. 479. Concerning images of women in classical Chinese fiction, one may consult Zheng Mingli, ed., *Tanchen Chi'ai — chonq Gudian Xiaoshu Kan Zongguo Nüxing* (Greedy, Angry, Silly, Lovely — Chinese Women in Classical Chinese Fiction), Taibei: Shida Shuyuan, 1989.
21. Wu Chengen, *Xiyou Ji* (Journey to the West), Taibei: Dafang, 1976, p. 228. In his, *The Classic Chinese Novel*, Professor C. T. Hsia devotes an entire chapter to a scholarly discussion of this great novel. There are several English translations. For example, Arthur Waley trans., *Monkey*, New York: John

Day, first published in 1944, reprinted by Grove Press in 1958, and by Penguin Books in 1961; Anthony C. Yu trans. and ed., *The Journey to the West*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 4 vols , 1977 – 1984; W. J. F. Jenner, trans., *Journey to the West*, 4 vols., Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1990. Anthony Yu's introduction in Volume I of his translation is a scholarly monograph in itself, discussing and analyzing the historical and literary, as well as the religious dimensions of the novel.

22. Feng Menglong, *Xingshi Hengyan* (Lasting Words to Awaken the World), originally published in 1627. The poem quoted here appears in the edition published in two volumes by the People's Press of Beijing in 1979, Vol. II, p. 644. Feng was a scholar-editor-official of the late Ming dynasty. Robert E. Hegel writes of Feng: "Feng Meng-lung was the most successful and well known of the literati editors. His three collections of short stories comprise 120 of China's finest short narratives. Nearly half are original compositions by Feng and another, unidentified, writer; the remainder were revised and edited from earlier short fiction and plays. Moreover, Feng Meng-lung doubled the length of the middle Ming novel of fantasy *P'ing-yao chuan* (Quelling the Demon's Revolt) and considerably modified the historical adventure novel *Tung Chou lieh-kuo chih* (Chronicles of the Eastern Chou States). A number of other novels are credited to Feng as well, and he compiled several anthologies of notes on the classics, folk songs, memoranda, and advice to gamblers, in addition to revising at least a dozen earlier plays." See Robert E. Hegel, *The Novel in Seventeenth-Century China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1981, pp. 59–60.
23. Lu Xun, *Nan Qiang Pei Diao Ji*, Beijing: People's Literature, 1973, pp. 3–4.
24. Mao Dun, *Hong* (Rainbow), Chengdu: People's Press, 1981, pp. 3–4. For a scholarly analysis of this novel, see C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 148–155.
25. *Hong*, p. 72.
26. Ibid., p. 146.
27. Ibid., p. 158.
28. Ba Jin, *Jia* (Family), Hong Kong: Qimin Publications, n.d., p. 21.
29. Ba Jin, *Chun* (Spring), Beijing: People's Press, 1980, p. 21.
30. Ibid., p. 85.
31. Ibid., p. 285.

32. Ibid.
33. Ba Jin, *Qiu* (Autumn), Beijing: People's Press, 1980, p. 439.
34. Cao Yu, *Leiyu* (Thunderstorm), Beijing: China Drama Publications, 1980, pp. 5–6. For a critical discussion of Cao Yu and his plays, see Joseph S. M. Lau, *Ts'ao Yü: The Reluctant Disciple of Chekhov and O'Neill*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970; for another interpretation, see Zhu Donglin, "Cao Yu Xiju yu Chekefu" (Cao Yu's Plays and Chekhov), in *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Yanjiu Congkan*, No. 3, 1983, Beijing, pp. 30–53.
35. Lao She, *Luotuo Xiangzi*, Beijing: People's Press, 1979, p. 133. Two recent English translations of this novel are Jeanne James trans., *Rickshaw*, Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1979; Shi Xiaoqing trans., *Camel Xiangzi*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1986.
36. *Luotuo Xiangzi*, p. 133.
37. Ibid., p. 134.
38. Ibid., p. 145.
39. Lao She, *Lihun* (Divorce), Hong Kong: Huitong Books, 1975, p. 123.
40. Ibid., p. 22.
41. Ibid., p. 246. For a selected list of English translations of Lao She's writings, see *Born of the Same Roots*, edited by Vivian Ling Hsu, Bloomington: Indiana University, 1981, p. 306.
42. Ling Mengchu, *Poan Jingqi*, p. 186. Ling Mengchu (1580–1644) was a scholar-official-playwright-publisher. *Poan Jingqi* and *Erke Poan Jingqi* (Second Collection of Striking the Table in Amazement at the Wonders) contains stories all written by Ling himself. Three stories from these two collections are translated into English and included in *Traditional Chinese Stories: Themes and Variations*, edited by Y. W. Ma and Joseph S. M. Lau, New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.
43. Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity*, p. 96.

Chapter 2

The Poems of Li Qingzhao (1084–1141)*

Kai-yu Hsu

Light breeze and fine rain, soughing and soughing
Again quicken the endless tears.
The flute player is gone, leaving an empty pavilion;
Forlorn. Who is to lean on the railing together
with me?
Picking a twig of beauty, but —
On earth or in heaven —
To whom can I send it?

(from Poem No. 38)[1]

These words of Li Qingzhao, regarded by many as the greatest woman poet in Chinese history, were written shortly after the death of her husband, who had been her devoted companion and faithful comrade in letters. His death was the strongest influence in her life, bringing to her poems a depth of feeling that, like a colorless blue in the flame of her genius, gave them brilliance and intensity. To be sure, Li Qingzhao had earned a position in Chinese poetry long before her husband's death, largely because of her rare sensitivity to the aesthetic and poetic quality of the world in which she lived. While her poetry reflected a limited world of nature and of

* This article first appeared in *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. LXXVII, No. 5, December 1962. The romanization in the original was according to the Wade-Giles system, which has been changed to *pinyin* to conform with the romanization of the other articles in the present volume, with a few exceptions, such as the author's name.

man, she more than compensated for this apparent lack with the depth of her imaginative penetration.

She wrote in the first part of the twelfth century, when such lyrical sensitivity was virtually absent in western poetry. Many of the western national literatures were yet to be awakened. The French epics were influential; the *chansons* set the tune to which English and German minstrels danced. The Norman conquest had had slight literary influence on the English, who continued to hear in their new ballads the old refrains of their earlier battle poems. The Germans had barely begun to parody courtly love in simple, folksy ditties. The Italians still wrote in Latin. By contrast, Li Qingzhao's accomplishment appears all the more remarkable.

Among the sixty poems of unquestioned authenticity, certain aspects of her life are revealed which may be used to trace, at least tentatively, the process of her poetic growth.[2] Such an attempt may show the contrast between the qualities of her earlier poems and her later achievement and may bring out more clearly the influence of her husband's death.

Li Qingzhao came from a family where literary discipline was a tradition.[3] Her parents were both quite distinguished in the literary circles of their time. Li Qingzhao's early youth was passed in an atmosphere of opulence and gaiety. Games, poetry-writing sessions, and family parties filled her daily life. She played on a swing in the garden, and told herself afterwards:

After pushing on the swing,
She got off, too exhausted to care for her dainty hands.
A delicate flower under heavy dew –
Perspiration moistened her light robe.
Seeing someone enter,
She ran in embarrassment,
Letting her stockings drag and hairpins drop.

Yet she leaned on the door and looked back,
Pretending to sniff at a twig of plum blossoms.

(Poem No. II, 5)

or after an outing, she would record the event:

Often remembered are the evenings on the creek
When wine flowed in the arbor and we lost our way.
It was late, our boat returned after a happy day
Entering, by mistake, the thicket of lotus clusters.
As we hurried to get through,
Hurried to get through,
A flock of herons, startled, rose to the sky.

(Poem No. 3)

She was a carefree girl of eighteen when she married Zhao Mingcheng, then a student at the Imperial Academy.[4] As a student, Zhao had yet to earn a regular income. Often, after his study, he would pawn one or two articles from his wardrobe to buy some stone rubbings as he passed by the booths of a well-known temple. When he got home, the young couple would immediately plunge into a discussion of the value of their new acquisitions over a cup of wine or tea. Zhao Mingcheng graduated two years later and started his government service. His income encouraged a widening of their collection to include paintings and antiques. However, their financial resources were not always sufficient to satisfy the needs of their connoisseurship. Once they discovered a painting by the tenth-century artist Xu Xi in the market. The dealer demanded 200,000 cash. They took the painting home, admired it for several days, and finally had to return it because they failed to raise that much money.[5] For a long time afterwards they were unhappy over this episode.

Each time they acquired an article, the couple would catalogue, annotate, and study its background in their steadily growing library. Their favorite game, with a

cup of tea or wine as the prize, was to check each other's knowledge of the relevant facts about each item in their collection. Frequently, as Li Qingzhao wrote, they laughed so much in playing this game that the tea cup was upset in the lap of the winner, who did not get to drink it after all. The joy of their companionship filled her boudoir, and she unblushingly recorded it in her poem:

From the flower peddler's
She bought a twig of spring about to open.
Lightly touched with traces of tears,
It still bore the marks of sunrise and morning dew.
Afraid that he might suspect —
That her face was not as pretty as the flower —
She pinned it in her hair,
Just to let him compare.

(Poem No. II, 2)

These early poems suggest that her reputation as a daring, unconventional girl, even before her marriage, was probably not without basis. Indeed, if her early work could be recaptured, it might include several poems like the following:

Her blossom-like face beams at a smile,
Her duck-style locks fly across her cheeks.
A turn of her eyes starts people guessing.
Infinite grace rests in that charm;
Profound feeling finds expression on a page of tender regret.
Another meeting is arranged when the moon shifts the flowers' shadow.

(Poem No. II, 14)[6]

A portait of Li Qingzhao — by the Qing painter Cui Chu

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

For a number of years Li Qingzhao and her husband filled several rooms with their collection. This period, from her marriage in 1101 to 1125, was the brightest in her life. In their collection, both she and her husband had found an ideal life together. Music, books, poetry, tea, and wine were the epitome of their happiness. In many ways they lived up to their exemplar, Tao Yuanming, the fourth-century poet. Li Qingzhao had always admired Tao Yuanming's famed work, *Guiqulai Ci* (*Return*). Their studio, where they played their literary games for tea, was named *Guilai Tang* referring to the same fourth-century poem. When she had her portrait painted in 1114, her husband wrote a colophon on it, again quoting the first line of the same poem. In her sixty poems, there are six direct references to Tao. Zhao Mingcheng, to be sure, never followed in Tao Yuanming's footsteps by walking out on his government assignment, but there is every indication that his heart was not in politics. His real life was by her side, in their studio, with their books. Their collaboration resulted in 502 *juan* of annotated books and several catalogues of antiques and objets d'art.

During this period Zhao Mingcheng had to travel frequently. His first temporary absence from her occasioned a poem which she dedicated to him:

The scent of red lotus fades, and the mat feels cool.
I loosen my robe
To board the boat alone.
Who sends a message through the cloud?
As the swans return in formation.
Moonlight floods the western chamber.
The petals shall fall and water shall flow.
One kind of longing,
Two victims of unnamed grief.
There is no way of getting rid of this thought;

Just as it recedes from the eyebrows,
In the heart, it swells.

(Poem No. 16)

Legend has it that she sent this poem to her husband, in typical story-book fashion, by writing it on a silk handkerchief. If true, that handkerchief proved to be more efficient than the bulletin board at Times Square in spreading the news, for almost overnight the poem became public property, particularly the last two lines. They captivated the most seasoned versifiers of her time with their disarming simplicity and their almost uncanny appropriateness. The *cai* (just), and *que* in these last lines (represented in the translation by a comma) were two extremely colloquial expressions at the time; their appearance in a poem of such stature was a breath of fresh air.

A woman writer in twelfth-century China, if her work was known at all, had the advantage of drawing greater attention than her male competitor could with a comparable accomplishment. And if her work expressed genuine personal feeling, such as that between husband and wife, her name would spread even more rapidly. This fact explains, at least in part, the general and enthusiastic recognition accorded Li Qingzhao by her peers. The poem on a silk handkerchief started the men of letters talking, and their impression was further reinforced by a second poem Li Qingzhao addressed to her husband on the *chongjiu* occasion (ninth day of the ninth month).

Light mist and dark clouds — it has been gloomy all day.
Rare incense burns in the animal-shaped censer.
Again comes the Double Ninth festival;
On my jade pillow and through the gauze mosquito net,
Evening chill arrives at midnight.

Serving wine after dusk near the chrysanthemum hedge,
A subtle scent fills my sleeves.
Don't say that it doesn't hurt:
As western wind flutters the curtain,
She has grown thinner than the yellow blossom.

(Poem No. 11)

A story preserved in Chinese poetic lore tells of Zhao Mingcheng's reaction upon receiving this poem. He was jealous of its brilliance and he sought to outdo it. After several days of relentless effort, Zhao wrote fifteen poems to the same melody and showed them, together with his wife's, to his friend Lu Defu.[8] To his infinite dismay, Lu singled out the very last three lines of Li Qingzhao's poem as the best lines of the whole group. As these stories spread, Li's reputation as a poet became firmly established.

The political fortune of the Song Dynasty was on the wane. The Tartars known as Nüzhen (Juchen) in the north invaded China proper and overran the Song capital in 1126. Zhao Mingcheng had to report to various posts without his family. At forty-three, Li Qingzhao for the first time really tasted the sorrow of parting as the uncertainties of life so cruelly dawned on her. Misfortunes followed one after another during the next two years. Li, often alone, fled the invading Tartars, who burned part of her library (over a dozen rooms full of books). In the summer of 1128, her husband died in Nanjing.[9] These tragic blows were too much for her to bear; a lengthy illness confined her to bed. When she finally regained enough strength to look beyond her window, she had lost her interest even in tea. Only the cassia branches in the garden offered her a measure of comfort:

Gray appears on my thinning temples after a spell of illness.
From my bed I watch the waning moon climb over the window pane.
Cardamom seeds are boiled together with their twigs,
There is no need for tea.
Books of verses on the pillow are nice where time keeps its leisurely pace.
The view beyond the door captivates as rain falls.
All day long offering sympathy to me
Are the cassia flowers.

(Poem No. 33)

Left alone to face life, Li Qingzhao managed to have her remaining 20,000-odd *juan* of books and another 2,000 *juan* of catalogues of art objects shipped to Hongzhou (Nanchang in Jiangxi). Before she could flee the increasingly threatened area, however, her life was made more unpleasant by a rumor telling of her secret offer of a jade jar to a certain Nüzhen chieftain. This alleged treasonous act was even reported to the emperor. Li Qingzhao had to resume her wandering in southeast China, very much alone, in a futile effort to recapture a bit of her former peaceful life. She left Hongzhou barely in time to escape the sacking of that city by the enemy troops, but all her remaining collection and library were lost.

Li Qingzhao in her fifties should have been a tired woman, exhausted and weary of the vicissitudes of life. Indeed, she was never again completely herself. But as memories returned to contrast her present with her past, the force of the tragic blows decreased along with the lapse of time, tears ran dry, and a pale languor settled on everything she saw, including the plum blossoms which had been her inspiration and joy in earlier years:

Every year when snow came
Often I drank with plum blossoms in my hair.
I crushed all the petals in my hands, still without knowing what to do,
All I gained was a lapel full of tears.
This year I am far away from home;
Gray appears on my thinning temples.
Looking at the way the wind blows tonight
It will be hard to see those plum blossoms again.

(Poem No. 10)

She went to live with her brother at Jinhua (in Zhejiang) where she tried to withdraw from all social contacts into a cherished corner of her memory. She locked her doors and windows to while her time away with the most meaningless gestures, staring at a crushed flower petal or playing with the candle wick:

Deep, deep the courtyard — how deep!
Cloudy windows and misty bowers are always closed.
The tips of willow twigs and the buds near the railing gradually emerge.
As spring returns to the trees of Nanjing,
In that ancient metropolis, people are growing old.
Much have I done in singing of the moon and the wind,
But now, already old, I have accomplished nothing.
Whose sympathy is there for the decline and the waning?
No interest have I to try playing with the lamp,
No desire to go out treading on the snow.

(Poem No. 30)

Drunk last night, I undressed late;
A withered twig of plum blossoms stayed in my hair.
When I felt the wine no more, the flower scent dispelled my sleep,
But hard it was to return from a distant dream.

The world was hushed, the moon lingering, and the
curtain low;
I crushed the fallen petals again,
And again fingered the clinging fragrance
To while away a few more hours.

(Poem No. 9)

On festive occasions, when her old acquaintances sought her out, she could not decline all the invitations. But she realized that her days of gaiety belonged to the past, and she preferred to retire behind the screens to listen to other peoples' laughter:

The molten gold of setting sun,
The blended marble of evening clouds:
Where is he?
Dense mist tints the willows,
Plaintive flute plays the tune of plums.
How can one know spring is in the air?
Fine festival of Yuanxiao
Balmy weather,
But who can say no dreary days from now on?
Thanks to friends in wine and poetry
Who come to invite me
With scented carts and handsome steeds.
In the capital during its golden era
The ladies had much leisure
To celebrate, I remember, particularly this festival.
Elaborate king-fisher capes,
Gold filigree brooches,
Clustered together competing for decor.
It's all over now:
With wind-blown locks and frosty tresses,
I dare not go out in the evening.
Better stay behind the screens
To listen to other people's laughter.

(Poem No. 8)

At times she had dreams and visions that lifted her, at least momentarily, out of that fog of melancholy. These were the moments of ethereal relief which she welcomed:

The sky is joined to surging clouds, and the clouds to morning mist.
A thousand starry sails dance in the fading Milky Way above.
It seems that I dreamed of going to the city of gods
Who asked me kindly, "Where are you returning to?"
I replied, "The road is long and time is late."
I write poetry and sometimes there is a startling line.
The Roc soars on the rising wind of ninety thousand miles.
Please don't stop, O wind,
But carry my leaf-like boat to the three sacred isles.

(Poem No. 20)

It would be an error to envisage Li Qingzhao in her later years as an old woman wasting away in utter despair. She nursed her infinite sorrow but her spirit was not broken. She had always been a person with an indomitable will to live and enjoy life, and she had not been completely unaware of the ugly reality around her, nor had she ever been totally lost in dealing with it. She met political strife even when she was a new bride.

Because her own father disagreed with the political views of her father-in-law, her father was demoted. The petition that she wrote and sent to her father-in-law, who was in a position of power, restored some of her own father's lost prestige. In her later years she maintained some communication with many people still active in politics, mostly her father's former colleagues. She continued to study ancient art and wrote commentaries. She retained an outlook on life sufficiently sanguine for her to design a new game called *Dama tu* with

a different verse for each of the numerous positions the players' chips could occupy. At sixty she was still very much a part of the literary life in the beleaguered land south of the Yangtze River. She was carrying her load of sorrow better than the boats in the Shuang Creek (near Jinhua, Zhejiang) could:

The wind pauses, the scent clings to the dust, but
flowers are no more.
It's getting late and yet I am too weary to comb my
hair.
Things are still the same, but he is gone, it is all over;
Tears well up before any word could be said.
They say that Spring is still young at the Shuang
Creek.
I thought of going to take a small boat there.
Only I fear the tiny boats of the Shuang Creek
Can not carry this much care.

(Poem No. 15)

This was Li Qingzhao talking to herself, making a private confession of the grief that gripped her unrelentingly from the death of her husband until her own death released her.[10]

Looking back at the development of classical Chinese poetry since Li Qingzhao, it becomes quite clear that she contributed to the literary stream in several respects:

(1) Her dexterous injection of many extremely colloquial expressions into her poetry did much to enrich the classical Chinese poetic language. Such expressions as *qilai* (get off, get up) and *rulai* (enter) in Poem No. II, 5 (already cited) and the modal particles *sha*, *na* in Poem No. 43

Guan shi ke lai sha — *Is it a visitor coming?*
De shi jiu shi na — *Not to say recapturing our old times!*

had been quite outside the established tradition of poetic diction. Their debut in verse had appeared in the late Tang works set to popular music, and as such they were yet to become accepted in dignified poetry. Li Qingzhao's use of these expressions was a bold but successful attempt — successful because the total effect of her poem gave them that magic touch of delicate finesse, and they in turn contributed that inimitable freshness to her poem. Wang Shuo, another Song Dynasty writer, remarked:

> Li Qingzhao wrote "long and short lines" (*ci*), molding them so intricately to suit her will. They are light, skillful, sharp and original, with infinite moods and postures. The fantastically vulgar expressions of the back alleys and streets, whatever suited her mood, she would write down in her poetry. Since time immemorial among the lettered women of cultured families there had never been one so completely defiant of convention as Li Qingzhao.[11]

(2) Vernacular expressions and colloquialisms were not the only magic touches Li gave to her poetry; her epithets and perfectly fitting allusions also left her imitators in despair. "The molten gold of the setting sun/ The blended marble of evening clouds," the "wind-blown locks and frosty tresses" (Poem No. 8), the "pampered willow" (Poem No. 39), and numerous others are gems that dazzle the reader and arrest him with the exactitude of their descriptive and suggestive power. Like the reduplicative expressions she used, these phrases ring clear and loud, and make the reader repeat them to himself again and again until he becomes their captive. The allusions in her poems are brought in so effortlessly that the reader's perception of their significance is also obtained effortlessly. They speak Li Qingzhao's language quite as plainly as Li's colloquial expressions. They betray no signs of literary strain and never ob-

scure the meaning or soften the forceful impact of the poem. In this Li Qingzhao is the opposite of Li Shangyin (813–858) whose allusions remain subjects of endless dispute among the philologists.[12] In Poem No. 16, we find:

Who sends a (brocade) message from the cloud?
As the swans return in formation.
Moonlight floods the western chamber.

The swans flying in formation usually depict a figure resembling the Chinese character of *yi* (one) or *ren* (man). They are suggestive messages from the cloud — suggestive of the change in season, the passage of time, and the delayed return of someone, and the suggestion is clear and immediate. Even the allusions in Li's poetry referring to historical persons and events are readily identifiable, such as those in Poem No. 14:

Zhongxuan grieved as he thought of his faraway home.
Might as well, then, accept my lot and drain the cup before me,
And not let the chrysanthemum at the eastern hedge turn golden in vain.

Zhongxuan is the Han Dynasty poet Wang Can (177–217) whose *fu* "On Climbing the Pavilion" almost every schoolboy knows by heart. In this poem Wang expresses his homesickness with moving poignancy. The eastern hedge is, of course, an image created by Tao Yuanming, which by the twelfth century had become part of common vocabulary. Li Qingzhao's allusions are always so clear that they lend force to her poetry and help it to communicate directly with the reader.

(3) The reduplicative words in her poems are onomatopoeic in more than one way. The

Zheng du, Zheng du ***Hurry to get through, Hurry to get through***

in Poem No. 3 suggests the sound and motion of the oars, as well as the excited chatter and movement of the

people in the boat. Elsewhere Li Qingzhao used the same device to great advantage in heightening the poetic and musical effect of her poems. The

Zhi fo,	*Do you know it,*
Zhi fo?	*Do you know it?*

in Poem No. 4 repeats the key question which the poet who knows sorrow and yet is unwilling to talk about it addresses to an apparently young and unsophisticated maid. These repetitions carry an irresistible force which works, as one critic said on Edith Piaf's songs of love and loss, like "a club bound finally to inflict a fatal blow" on the reader.[13] The despair in Poem No. II, 4, and Poem No. 40 comes forth in intensity to envelop the reader in the lines:

Wu na,	*Nothing else,*
Wu na,	*Nothing else,*

and

Xiu,	*Let it go,*
Xiu,	*Let it go,*

The loneliness suggested by a cool, hazy, desolate landscape and the fall of *wutong* leaves is driven home in Poem No. 34[14]

Lin gaoke	*I lean on a high balcony*
Luanshan pingye yan guang bo.	*The random hills and immense wilderness*
Yan guang bo,	*under a filmy haze,*
Qiya guihou	*After crows returned to their perches,*
Mutian wen jiao.	*A bugle call echoes through the evening sky.*
Duanxiang canjiu qinghuai e	*The incense is dead, the wine tired, and the feeling low.*
Xifeng cuichen wutong luo	*The west wind hastens the falling leaves,*
Wutong luo	*Falling Wutong leaves*

You hai qiuse	*Still autumn colors,*
You hai jimo.	*Still solitude.*

Li Qingzhao's unforgettable Poem No. 24, of course, illustrates this tour de force most dramatically with its untranslatable

Xun xun mi mi	*Search and search, look and look again,*
Leng leng qinq qing,	*Lonely,*
Qi qi cancan qi qi	*Chilly, and dreary*
Wutong geng jian xiyu	*Fine rain on Wutong leaves*
Dao huang hun dian dian	*Keeps dripping and dropping as evening*
di di	*arrives*

This is such an unusual poetic feat that many later writers attempted, in spite of repeated judicious warnings, to imitate it, without success.[15]

(4) The musical quality of these poems reflects her mastery of the musical force of the language. She made use of the existing *ci* forms but was never enslaved by them. Her keen sense for the rhythmic movement in a poem enabled her to create many new *ci* forms of which Poem No. 11 is one example. Even when she was using an existing form she almost always departed from the fixed rules to create a rhythmic effect entirely her own. The reduplicative word, *xiu xiu*, in the first line of the second stanza in Poem No. 40 keeps the rhyme of the entire poem, which was a departure from the rhyming scheme of this tune as it had been handed down to Li Qingzhao's time. But since the effect created by this departure was so musically impressive, Li Qingzhao's variation set a new pattern superseding the old.[16]

(5) Perhaps even more important than all these innovations that come close to technical perfection in poetry writing are Li Qingzhao's metaphorically suggestive devices that identify an external landscape or a trivial

object with the internal, most private sentiment of the poet. Through this device the reader is compelled to identify his own personal emotive response with the poet's because they share the common experience of viewing such a landscape or common object. This is part of the Chinese poetic tradition that dates back to high antiquity, but this Li Qingzhao achieved with a combination of the wild fantasies of Qu Yuan (author of the *Chuci*) and the transcendental serenity of Wang Wei (701–761). The plum blossoms are not merely an object of ethereal beauty to be described objectively in Li's world of poetry, otherwise her poems about them would not be able to transcend the boundaries of the trivial occasional poems in which classical Chinese poetry abounds. A twig of plum blossoms, viewed by a poet whose springtime is far behind, is nature's mockery of man:

Late winter, near the source of the creek,
Several plum blossoms are seen
Cut out in perfection.
Like cream in haze, like sculptured gems the tender scented sprays
Purposely betray the arrival of spring.
While the wind is tender and rain soft,
You had better pin these blooms to cover your hair.
For you must know, the flute without mercy
Is again about to play the tune of the evening.[17]

(Poem No. 1)

The more direct identification of the poet with the lean chrysanthemum that alone survives in frosty winter (Poem No. 41) was in the best tradition of Qu Yuan and Tao Yuanming. In these poems, objective correlatives were skillfully used.

When Li Qingzhao paints a landscape in a few strokes to suggest a mood, it is a subtle device much more ef-

fective than any readily identifiable poetic fallacy. In the following poem, the last line, though a simple picture with no striking color, has a moving quality from which no reader can escape.

Rippling spring light in late April
A whiff of dying incense smoke hovers over the burner.
Waking from a dream I find my hairpin under the pillow.
Swallows are yet to return, though people are playing the game of weeds now.[18]
Plum blossoms are over, and catkins have appeared on willow trees.
An evening drizzle wets the deserted swing.

(Poem No. 2)

Unlike Wang Wei at his best, who let himself merge with nature and be absorbed in nature, Li Qingzhao here uses a landscape to heighten the emotional intensity of the poet. She is not only in the poem, but at its very center, yet her feeling is suggested by nothing more than a seemingly trivial personal effect — the fallen hairpin under her pillow. Did she have a pleasant dream? Could she possibly have a good dream? What kind of dream could she have had? All these questions are left to the reader's imagination. The passage of time, the changing of seasons that reminds man of his vanishing life, are suggested through several images of objects in nature — the growth and decay of plants and flowers. This last point is most poetically treated in Poem No. II, 13:

New shoots, under watch, have grown into bamboos in the garden,
And all fallen petals have joined the mud on the swallow's nest.

This, then, is the real secret of her success. Only on extremely rare occasions did she allow the intensity of her feeling to emerge on the surface. Most often she would point at the fading red on the branches to suggest, but never to describe, the world of vanishing beauty in which she was spending her last years:

Last night in light rain and gusty wind
My sound sleep dispelled not the lingering effect of wine.
I try to ask her who rolls up the screens.
"The apple tree," she says, "is still the same."
But ah, do you know it,
Do you know it?
The green may be thriving, the red must be thin now.

(Poem No. 4)

It is in this supremely quiet restraint, this nonchalance so artfully covering a sea of boiling emotion, that Li Qingzhao lodges her claim as the greatest woman poet in classical Chinese literature.[20]

Notes

1. My translations of Li Qingzhao's *ci* are based on the following edition, which seems to be the most reliable because the editor has consulted a large number of editions and noted their discrepancies. Zhao Wanli, *Jiaoji Song Jin Yuan ren ci (Collated ci of Song, Jin, and Yuan Poets)*, Nanjing: Academia Sinica, 1931). Li Qingzhao's poems are numbered as they appear in the draft of my translation. The *ci* genre began to flourish in the late Tang Dynasty. It has been regarded as a "liberation" from the *shi* genre, which required a rigid prosodic uniformity based on quatrains with a uniform number of syllables in each line. The *ci* was set to the tunes popularly known in the 10th century, hence the necessity to vary the number of lines and the number of syllables in each line. There is evidence that at least 924 *ci* styles existed.
Editor Li Yu-ning's Note: Professor Kai-yu Hsu's article was originally published in 1962. Since then a more thoroughly annotated edition of Li Qingzhao's collected writings has been published, that is, *Li Qingzhao ji jiaozhu (Collected*

Writings of Li Qingzhao with Annotations), compiled and annotated by Wang Xuechu, Beijing: People's Literature Press, 1979. This book contains not only Li Qingzhao's writings with extensive notes, but also materials on her life and works which provide helpful leads for further research.

2. I am grateful to Professor T'ien-yi Li of Yale Univ., who correctly pointed out, at the 1961 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago, where the first draft of this paper was read, that the dating of Li Qingzhao's poems will remain largely conjectural until further evidence has been uncovered. I attempt such a treatment of the subject only with the hope that her poetry may be better appreciated. A definitive chapter of literary history centering around Li Qingzhao must await further extensive research.
3. Her father, a high-ranking government official, was a writer in his own right. Her mother was taught by her own grandfather Wang Gongchen, a *zhuangyuan* (who passed the highest imperial examination at the very top of the list). The best single source of biographical information for Li Qingzhao is still her own preface and postscript to the catalogue of objects of art which she and her husband collected. Slightly different versions of these two autobiographical essays are found in a number of works, e.g., Xie Wuliang, *Zhongguo funü wenxueshi* (*A History of Chinese Literature — Women Writers*), Shanghai: Zhonghua, *(1916?)*, Book III, pp. 5–9; Jiang Shangxian, *Li Qingzhao ci xinshang* (*An Appreciation of Li Qingzhao's ci*), Tainan: Yiming, (1960), pp. 63–68.
4. The year of her marriage has been disputed by many scholars, including Hu Shih. Here I accept the latest findings by Xia Chengtao in his *Tang Song ci luncong* (*Essays on the ci of the Tang and Song Dynasties*), Shanghai: Gudian, (1956), pp. 190–197, which establishes Li's birth date in 1084, making the age when she married eighteen.
5. The painting is preserved in the Palace Collection. See its reproduction in *Three Hundred Masterpieces of Chinese Painting from the Palace Museum*, Taichung, Taiwan: National Palace Museum, (1959), Plate 54.
6. Zhao Wanli, section "Suyu ci" 11a, notes the skepticism of several writers on the authenticity of this poem, but it seems that before definite counter-evidence is secured, these poems should continue to be treated as part of Li's writing that reveal another aspect of her life and thought.
7. One variant reading in certain editions, possibly a misprint, could change "the mat" in this line into a plant that flourishes in autumn.

8. Records differ on the number of poems Zhao wrote to the same melody. *Langguan ji* (quoted in Zhang Congxiao, *Cilin jishi*, Juan 19, 7a) has "fifteen"; Tan Zhengbi has "over fifty" in his *Zhong Guo nüxing wenxue shenghuo* (*The Literary Lives of Chinese Women*), Shanghai: Guangming, (1931), p. 247.
9. Li's family misfortunes during these years included: Zhao forced to go alone to assume the governor ship of Ziquan (near present-day Jinan, Shandong) in 1126; Zhao's mother dead in Nanjing in 1127; Li's home and library in Qingzhou (Yidu, Shandong) burned by the Tartars in the winter of 1127; flight to Ganshui (Ganxian, Jiangxi in the spring of 1128; Zhao reporting for duty alone at Huzhou (Jiaxing, Zhejiang) while she stayed at Guichi in Anhwei; Zhao's death from malaria in Nanjing in the summer of 1128.
10. The legend about Li's second marriage seems to have been adequately disproved by Xia Chengtao, op. cit.
11. In his *Biji manzhi*, quoted in Jiang Shangxian, p. 21, and in Lu Kanru, *Zhongguo shi shi* (*History of Chinese Poetry*), Beijing, Zuojia, (1957), p. 666.
12. Take Li Shangyin's "Jingse" ("The Jewel-inlaid Lute"), for instance. See comment on this poem in *Li Yishan ji* (*The Poems of Li Shangyin*), annotated by Feng Hao. Taichung, Zhongyung, (1956), p. 342.
13. Milton Bracker, "Miracle of the 'Sparrow Kid,'" *The New York Times Magazine* (22 Jan. 1961), p. 35.
14. The two missing characters from the second line of the second stanza have not yet been found. *Wutong*, a plant resembling paulownia, is one of those poetic images in Chinese literature whose rich associations defy translation.
Editor Li Yu-ning's note: Recent scholarship has established that "the two missing characters," which Professor Kai-yu Hsu referred to, are "xifeng" (west wind). Hence I have filled the original blank space before "hastens" (third line from bottom on page 88) with "The west wind...."
15. Shu Menglan, *Baixing ci pu* (*The Baixing ci Styles*), Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, p. 84.
16. Shu Menglan, p. 83.
17. The flute (*jiangdi*) in the line second to the last is actually a bugle-horn introduced into China by the northern non-Chinese troops. Its musical character, perhaps often suggesting the effect of the taps played by a skillful bugler, cannot be adequately conveyed in the word horn or bugle or flute alone.

18. *Haitang*, a plant frequently mentioned in classical Chinese poems, is identified as the crabapple. I took the liberty of using *apple blossom* instead, because of the sound of the word and the general association with the names of these plants.
19. The season is late and the grass has grown tall enough to be used in the traditional folk game. The game is played by two players each selecting a strong length of grass stem. A knot is tied at one end of the grass stem. The two pieces are then interlocked at the knotted ends while the players each pull the other ends to see whose grass breaks first. Another folk game played with grass is commonly associated with the Dragon Boat festival season. On that day, people collect specimens of grass, weeds, and shrubs in a contest which awards the most extensive collection.
20. This study is based on a paper read before the Chinese Literature Panel at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies in Chicago on 28 March 1961.

Chapter 3

Images of Women in Yuan Drama

Fan Pen Chen

Descendant of Tang and Song drama as well as the *zhugongdiao* (Medley), Yuan drama represents the first flowering of Chinese opera. The spectacular rise of this lyrical drama is generally attributed to the abolition of the civil service examinations during the first half of the Yuan dynasty (1234–1368) by the Mongol emperors. Scholars, who could no longer aspire to join the official ranks through passing the civil service examinations, now diverted their talents to the flourishing field of play-writing and produced some of the greatest works in the history of Chinese drama.

This genre of drama, known as Yuanzaju, is unique in its structure. Each piece consists of four acts and frequently a "wedge" in the form of a prologue or interlude. Although Yuanzaju has traditionally been translated as Yuan drama, these plays are closer in form to opera than to contemporary drama. Moreover, the Yuanzaju were generally more admired for their numerous arias than for their plots. A small number of actors and actresses appear but only one of them, the protagonist, sings all the lyrics.[1] Although the titles of some six to seven hundred plays are known to us, only one-fourth of them have been preserved.

This paper is a preliminary study of the images of women in Yuan drama and is based on the extant 167 Yuanzaju in the *Yuanquxuan* (*YQX*)[2] and the *Yuanquxuan waibian* (*YQXWB*).[3] Rather than representing historical truths concerning the behavior and lives of women during this era, the images of women in

these plays are more appropriately reflections of the desires and fears of their male playwrights and audiences. They are mirrors which reveal private yearnings of individuals as well as public demands of society. By using a theoretical framework which emphasizes the functions of the characters, I hope to eschew the usual practice of evaluating them based on patriarchal values. In this study, female images in Yuanzaju are shown to be used as props to satisfy male fantasies and perpetuate patriarchal ideals. The basis of this inquiry is theoretically simple, but it takes issue with prevalent critical analyses, both Marxist and humanistic, of many of the women in Yuanzaju and enables one to deconstruct them. Examined without twentieth-century (hence anachronistic) world views, romantic heroines are not rebels against Confucian strictures or champions of independence; they are merely fictive configurations of women who satisfy the desires of their playwrights and audiences. Similarly, instead of following patriarchal Confucian viewpoints in applauding female martyrs and condemning evil concubines, the present line of analysis allows one to consider them as instruments for didacticism: images created in order to espouse desirable social values.

In his *Theatre Double Game,*[4] Samuel Selden attributes the appeal of effective plays to success in three areas: excitement, fulfillment and illumination.[5] According to Selden, the sense of excitement is created by "change," "action," and "feeling" through plot and language. This area will not be of concern to this study. Of more use for illustrating the appeal of the different types of women portrayed in the plays studied are the areas of fulfillment and illumination. Audiences are satisfied either through fulfillment of their suppressed desires or illumination of the higher ideals enacted.

Similar observations have been noted by traditional Chinese scholars. Cai Zhongxiang's *Synopsis of [Theo-*

retical and Thematic] Discourses on Traditional Chinese Drama (Zhongguo gudian julun gaiyao[6]*)* categorizes the various traditional discourses on the functions of drama into three general areas: didactic *(jiaohuashuo)*, entertaining *(yuleshuo)*, and romantic *(juqingshuo)*. In Selden's terms, the didactic would correspond to the function of illumination, whereas entertaining and romantic would describe the appeal of fulfillment.

Women characters who satisfy the psychological needs of the audience belong to the fulfillment category; they provide the audience a means for fulfilling subdued fantasies.[7] Romantic heroines constitute the majority of this group, followed to a lesser extent by women of unusual intelligence and ingenuity, especially female victims who emerge triumphant. Women characters used to promote social values exemplify aspects of the function of illumination in Selden's theoretical framework. In Yuanzaju plays, they are employed by their playwrights for the purpose of endorsing specific social ideals, as well as to warn against certain types of females or involvement in certain situations. These are represented by the virtuous women, by the femmes fatales, and to a lesser extent, by a number of unenlightened wives. Related to this function of illumination are the faceless female victims of society whose plights affirm the inferior status of women.

The fact that only one character is allowed to sing all the arias in Yuanzaju plays, makes the position of the protagonist overwhelmingly powerful. The plays inevitably evolve around the feelings and points of view of the protagonists. Hence, in this study, the number of female protagonists in the major categories are especially noted.

Of the forty-six cases of female characters who serve the function of "fulfillment," romantic heroines definitely prevail. Thirty-three of them, almost three-quarters, belong to the category of the romantic, while only

eight belong to the category of the ingenious. The female point of view figures prominently in the romantic plays, with almost three-fourths (25/35) of them featuring women protagonists. Aside from a young wife (Li Yunying in *Li Yunying Sends a Message Via Wind on a Paulownia Leaf) (Li Yunying fengsong wutongye)* (YQX:1221–1231), three divine beings in the forms of dragon princesses (in *Liu Yi [Asked to] Dispatch a Letter at Lake Dongting) (Dongtinghu Liu Yi Chuanshu)* (YQX:1625–1637), *Scholar Zhang Boils the Sea (Zhangsheng Zhuhai)* (*YQX*:1703–1715), and Daoist fairies (the two immortals in *Liu Chen and Ran Chao Unintentionally Enter the Peach Blossom Spring) (Liu Chen Ran Chao wuru taoyuan)* (YQX:1353–1367), most of the romantic heroines are either courtesans or young maidens. In fact, twelve of the thirty-five are courtesans[8] and eighteen of them are young maidens.[9] Hence, our discussion of the romantic female characters will concentrate on the portrayal of courtesans and young maidens.

Fantasies and desires are fulfilled in the romantic plays.[10] Generally the couples fall in love at first sight, encounter obstacles and finally marry. Since a woman is considered an impediment to a man's career, romance elicits objections from either the girl's parents or the man's friends, who force him to take the civil service examinations. The romance comes to a temporary halt. The young scholar then returns, having invariably attained first place in the palace examination, and reunites with the beautiful woman who has been faithfully waiting for him.

Beautiful, intelligent, faithful, and often times righteous, the romantic heroine is an ideal object of love. Her fairy-tale romance fulfills the private fantasies of the audience, for the majority of whom marriage to a person one has fallen in love with can only be a dream.

True to the world of fantasy, most of the courtesans

in the Yuanzaju are the most beautiful and talented in their districts, ranking top in the official lists as the *shangting hangshou;* just as all the young scholars of these romances eventually attain first place in the palace examinations.

Faithfulness is a prerequisite of the romantic heroine. In order to make him take his examination, sometimes a friend of the young man tricks him into leaving the beauty. In *A Sprig of Red Pear Flowers* (YQX:1080–1092) and *Listening to the Zither on the Bamboo Mound* (YQX:1442–1455), the heroes' friends convince them that the heroines are actually ghosts. But more frequently, it is the madam, her "mother," who chases him away after his funds have been depleted. *Tale of the Jade Comb* (YQX:1410–1424), *Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers* (YQX:1425–1441) and *Dream of the Cloud Window* (YQXWB:782–794) are all examples of this common practice. This forced separation, however, not only romantically enhances their love but also practically enables the man to obtain both his degree and his woman. In all but one case, the courtesans remain chaste during their separation despite treméndous pressures. Refusing to receive any more customers, a courtesan usually suffers terrible harassment from her "mother" and may be sold as a maid, or may turn sick and even die. As usual, faithfulness is more important for the woman than for the man. Even in the singular case where the courtesan He Lianlian in *Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers* (YQX:1425–1441) succumbs to her "mother" and marries another, she remains faithful to him by bringing about the husband's downfall and eventually marries the original lover. The stigma against marriage to courtesans does not seem to be as pervasive during the Yuan dynasty as it was during other periods,[11] although most of the courtesans must have been taken as concubines rather than as main wives. Even so, a few of the playwrights have sought to improve the status of their

courtesans and to make their marriages even more psychologically fulfilling for the audience. In *Dream of Yangzhou* (YQX:794–806) and *Marriages in Two Reincarnations* (YQX:971–986), the courtesans Zhang Haohao and Jade Flute Maiden are adopted as daughters by powerful officials before their reunion and marriage with their erstwhile lovers. Thus, these female images embody the ultimate wishful desires of young men who seek romance in the gay quarters. Not only can they find real love there, but, more marvelous still, the prostitutes they might marry may be "daughters" of great officials!

The concept that the images of these romantic courtesans reflected male fantasies rather than plausible reality is further borne out by Wilt Idema and Stephen West's studies on the social milieu and position of entertainers. The social values of these women were so different from those of the rest of society that it was highly unlikely that they would sacrifice themselves so readily for poor, young scholars. In a world where women are the primary money-earners and female values dominate, "all the values that the real world holds are like the negative of a photograph in the world of the Compound...what the parents of the sing-song girl consider obedience and filial respect is, in the eyes of the world, greed, lust, and destruction."[12]

Another group of romantic heroines, the young maidens, share the characteristics of beauty, intelligence, and faithfulness with the courtesans. But because of their seclusion from the world of men, they tend to long for love, a few quite desperately, and to fall in love most readily. Often they seem to be in love with love. Li Qianjin in *On the Horse Near the Wall* (YQX:332–347), Wang Yueying in *The Story of the Shoe Wang Yueying Left on New Year's Eve* (YQX:1265–1279) and Xiao Shulang in *Pusaman* (YQX:1532–1541) all express longing for love before they are smitten. Indeed, Li Yuying

Cui Yingying and her maid Hongniang
— from a Ming edition of Romance of the Western Chamber

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in *The Mandarin Duck Quilt* (YQX:53–69) doesn't even recognize her beloved when they meet again.

The preservation of virginity for these passionate young ladies is also of particular concern to many of the playwrights. Ideally, the maidens would fall in love without losing their state of "perfection" before their marriages. There are two exceptions to this ideal situation. In *On the Horse Near the Wall,* Li Qianjin elopes with the young hero and even bears him two children before their relationship is discovered; she is then forced to leave him. The tragedy becomes a comedy, however, when she turns out to be the very person to whom the hero was originally matched. A more typical romantic heroine who also compromised herself before marriage is Cui Yingying. One of the protagonists in *Romance of the Western Chamber,* Yingying is also the most famous romantic heroine in Yuan drama.

Romance of the Western Chamber is, in format, the most unusual play in Yuanzaju. It consists of five "books" of four acts per book, making a total of twenty acts, instead of the usual four acts per play. Cui Yingying is the protagonist of the second "book." Based mainly on Master Dong's (Dong *Jieyuan)* extensive *Romance of the Western Chamber* in *zhugongdiao,* the original predecessor of both works is, however, the short Tang *chuanqi* tale entitled "Yingying Zhuan" by Yuan Zhen. Unlike the original Cui Yingying in the Tang story who is jilted after compromising herself, the Cui Yingying in the *zhugongdiao* and Yuanzaju marries Scholar Zhang at the end. In the Yuanzaju, a villain is also created and subsequently punished to add to the sense of excitement and psychological satisfaction.

Romance of the Western Chamber depicts the love story of Scholar Zhang and Cui Yingying, daughter of a deceased prime minister. On their way home, while transporting the minister's coffin, Cui Yingying and her mother reside temporarily in the western chamber of a

monastery. Scholar Zhang sees her accidentally and is so smitten by her beauty that he decides to also stay at the monastery. During a threatened attack by bandits whose chieftain desires to obtain Yingying for his wife, Scholar Zhang saves the family through connections with a general. But rather than giving Yingying to the young man in marriage as promised during the bandit threat, her mother now reneges. Scholar Zhang becomes so despondent that he almost dies of love sickness. Out of pity for him and resenting her mother's deceitfulness, Yingying eventually compromises herself and thus saves his life. As Yingying's beauty blossoms even more radiantly under the influence of love, her mother becomes suspicious and discovers their liaison. The mother then forces Scholar Zhang to go to the capital to pass the examinations, so that he can marry Yingying as a promising graduate. Scholar Zhang indeed emerges as the top candidate, but he becomes sick and returns late. In the meantime, Yingying's villainous cousin, Zheng Heng arrives and asks for Yingying's hand, claiming that Scholar Zhang has already taken the daughter of a high official as wife. Yingying's mother almost marries her to Zheng Heng but, fortunately, Scholar Zhang returns in the nick of time. The villain, out of shame, rams his head into a tree trunk and kills himself. With all the obstacles to their union properly cleared, the couple finally marries.

The prevalent current approach by Chinese readers to the analysis of the maidens in the romantic Yuanzaju plays is that of affirmation and applause. Considered as champions of the freedom of choice in marital matters and as rebels against Confucian orthodoxy and even against feudalism, romantic heroines are acclaimed for their independence and courage.[13] Through them, Yuan playwrights are supposed to have exerted positive social influences. Cui Yingying, in particular, is commended for her courageous act of taking the risk of compromis-

ing herself for her beloved. Given the facts that both the playwrights and the audience were predominantly male[14] and that the plots rely heavily on the suspension of disbelief,[15] I feel it highly unlikely that the romantic heroines were created to inspire revolutionary social thinking. Admirable as they may seem within the world of the plays and from our modern perspective, they are ultimately props created to satisfy the desires of their audiences. The impracticality of their actions in real life situations is evident.

Indeed, the portrayals of these young maidens reflect the fantasies of society about love and marriage. The girl often accidentally meets and falls in love with precisely the young man to whom she has been matched by her parents. After the initial meeting, she is usually the aggressor who arranges for a tryst and is ready to compromise herself when her mother disrupts the rendezvous and forces the young man to seek his degree. Both Miss Fei in *Tricky Maid* (YQX:1146–1171) and Dong Xiuying in *Romance by the Eastern Wall* (YQXWB:202–218) arrive at their lovers' bedrooms in order to "save the poor young men from dying of love-sickness." They are caught by their mothers and eventually marry the scholars after they have returned as top graduates.

If a mother does not intrude, an accident or supernatural event occurs to ensure the preservation of the maiden's chastity. More often than not, it is a fortuitous turn of events rather than will power which leaves her pure for a legitimate marriage. In *Qiannü's Soul Leaves Her Body* (YQX:705–719), the maiden's soul (her id) leaves her body to consummate with her beloved so that the real body can remain chaste until their marriage.[16] In *The Story of the Shoe Wang Yueying Left on New Year's Eve* (YQX:1265–1279), the young man most improbably falls into a deep slumber the night of their tryst. Miracles can also enable lovers to transcend death. In *The Peach Blossom* (YQX:1684–1702), the

heroine dies of love-sickness but then manages to marry her beloved by using the body of a beautiful maiden who is destined to die young.

Although the behavior of all the romantic heroines embodies male fantasies, the rather aggressive actions of some heroines seem particularly demonstrative of such fantasies. These girls perform unlikely acts of individualism to the delight of their downtrodden male counterparts. They are characters such as Liu Yue'e in *Hovel with Wind and Snow (Fengxue poyaoji)* (YQXWB:324–336) and Meng Deyao in *Serving Her Husband With Her Head Bowed (Ju'anqimei)* (YQX:914–928) who are wealthy young ladies who insist on marrying poor scholars against all advice, Guixiang in *Dream of the Pink Robe (Feiyimeng)* (YQ-XWB:71–80) who ingeniously plans to marry her betrothed despite his destitute situation, and Xiao Shulan in *Pusaman* (YQX:1532–1541) who chases desperately after the tutor employed by her family. The appeal of such characters, just as with all romantic heroines, lies in their general improbability and their desirability for male fantasies.

A much smaller group of women in the Yuanzaju serves to fulfill the psychological need of the audience for poetic justice. Of the forty-six women studied, eleven belong to the category of the ingenious. The ingenious woman may be virtuous but it is her intelligence rather than adherence to specific ideals which elicits applause. Unlike the femme fatale, her ingenuity is never employed for evil purposes. This type of woman ranges from courtesans and maids to young ladies and wives.

Five are used as agents for men's schemes against each other. But the ingenious women never remain victims of their situations; they always emerge triumphant by virtue of their wits. Some playwrights simply celebrate the intelligence of a woman, be she a courtesan who rescues a colleague from a brutal husband, a

maiden who outwits an old fortune-teller, or a young wife who saves her husband's life. Most of the women in this group are secondary characters in their plays. Even the few who occupy the position of protagonist do not figure nearly as prominently as the romantic heroines discussed. Furthermore, although their existence shows a fascination for members of the "weaker sex" who triumph and a recognition of their intelligence, they are ultimately props used by the playwrights for the benefit of their male partners. They are valued because they assist the patriarchal cause. In *Slicing Fish at the River Pavilion During Mid-Autumn (Wang Jiangting zhongqiuqiekuai)* (YQX: 1656–1669), *Zhong Lichun Uses Her Wits and Courage to Conquer Qi (Zhong Lichun zhiyongdingQi)* (YQXWB:497–574), *Two Military Advisors Compete Across the River (Liangjunshi gejiangdouzhi)* (YQX:1299–1320) and *Plotting Secretly in the Hall of Colorful Clouds (Jinyuntang anding lianhuanji)* (YQX:1543–1566), the ingenuity and audacity of all the protagonists are employed to aid and often save their husbands. Even Peach Blossom Maiden who manages consistently to outshine Zhou Gong, the seasoned fortune-teller in *The Peach Blossom Maiden (Taohuanü)* (YQX:1015–1040), is brought back into the fold of patriarchal patronage at the end of the story. She wins the honor of being welcomed by the old man as his daughter-in-law.

Female characters used for the purpose of "illumination" or didacticism/perpetuation of social values, can be divided into three categories: the virtuous, the femmes fatales, and the unenlightened wives. While the virtuous women affirm Confucian ideals through acts of self-sacrifice, the femmes fatales are used to warn against the evils of women. The unenlightened wives are, on the other hand, normal, sensible characters who initially are simply oblivious to the higher social values propounded by the playwrights. Their "conversion" to the

viewpoints of their husbands is used to affirm specific ideals.

Although despicable and evil women abound in the Yuanzaju, none of these femmes fatales are ever allowed to express their feelings lyrically; as a result, the virtuous, half of whom are protagonists (6/12), tend to be by far more interesting. Neither the playwrights nor the audience seem to be interested in the views of those whom they have already condemned as evil. Instead, their sympathies lie with those who sacrifice themselves deliberately to uphold social ideals, especially those that seem unnatural to human instincts. And by way of endorsement, the sufferings of these women are invariably vindicated or recompensed through recognition of their heroism, if nothing else.

Six of these virtuous women sacrifice themselves to preserve the lives and/or careers of their husbands or the heirs of their lords. Wang Zhaojun in *Autumn in the Han Palace (Hangongqiu)* (YQX:1–13) drowns herself for her emperor; the wife of Duke Zhao of Chu in *Those Not Closely Related Must Leave the Boat (Shuzhexiachuan)* (YQX:277–293) also jettisons herself into the river to lighten the load and save her lord; Zhuan Zhu's wife in *Wu Yuan Plays the Flute (Wu Yuan Chu-ixiao)* (YQX:647–667) commits suicide so that her husband can feel free to follow his new friend; the palace maid in *Chen Lin Carries a Cosmetic Case at the Golden Water Bridge (Jinshuiqiao Chen Lin baozhuanghe)* (YQX:1456–1475) kills herself by plunging down the stairs in order to save a prince; the mother of the orphan in *The Orphan of Zhao (Zhaoshi Gu'er)* (YQX 1476–1489) hangs herself to persuade a retainer to protect the heir; and Tao Kan's mother in *Shearing Her Hair to Entertain (Jianfa daibin)* (YQXWB:568–580) sells her hair to entertain her son's teacher. Related to this group are two selfless mothers who sacrifice their own sons in order to protect their stepsons. Both of the mothers in

A scene from The Wronged Dou E.

Butterfly Dreams (Hudiemeng) (YQX:632–646) and *The Good Mother Would Not Identify the Corpse In Order to Protect the Filial Son (Jiuxiaozi xianmu burenshi)* (YQX:756–776) mistreat their own sons to earn praise for loving their stepsons whose natural mothers have died.

Along more conventional lines are the wives who remain chaste despite enticement, trickery, and/or coercion. One example is Meiying in *Qiuhu Flirts with His Wife (Qiuhu xiqi)* (YQX:542–556) who holds fast to solitude despite extreme poverty, rumors of her husband's death and pressures from her parents for her to remarry. When her husband does return after ten years, he has become a wealthy official. Failing to recognize each other, he flirts with her in a mulberry grove and proposes to her. She rejects him and later requests a divorce. Her mother-in-law intervenes however, and she is forced to "live happily ever after." This play is usually seen as an amusing comedy, but it also poignantly manifests society's double standards and the cost and irony of happiness available to its exemplary women.[17]

One of the most highly praised paragons of virtue and probably the most famous female character in Yuan drama is Dou E in *The Wronged Dou E (Dou E yuan)* (YQX:1499–1517). Her story epitomizes the influence of patriarchal values. Given to an old female usurer as daughter-in-law at the age of seven so that her father can go to the capital to take his examinations, Dou E grows up, and loses her husband soon after their marriage. Furthermore, her mother-in-law decides to marry an old ruffian whose villainous son now desires the steadfast Dou E. When the old ruffian is mistakenly poisoned by his son, Dou E pleads guilty to save her mother-in-law, whom she fears will be implicated. Supernatural occurrences after her execution prove her innocence and she is finally avenged after her father returns as an important official and meets her ghost.

Viewed from the theoretical framework of this present study, Dou E is a hapless prop used to illuminate Confucian ideologies. The intention of the playwright is probably not overtly didactic, especially since his audience was mostly male. But this self-sacrificing heroine definitely performs the function of promoting the Confucian ideals of chastity, filial piety, and selflessness. Aside from the one exception to be mentioned, Chinese readers invariably acclaim her to be an exemplar of virtue and a tragic heroine, and cite her as an example of the playwright Guan Hanqing's sympathy and deep respect for women.[18] In describing Dou E as a "sacrificial lamb" and a perfect woman, the modern critic Zhang Shuxiang suggests that it is through this type of martyrdom for higher ideals that human existence is given meaning.[19] I agree, however, with Ma Sen's controversial view that downtrodden female figures like Dou E are used to perpetuate traditional Chinese ethics. He feels that the ethical system was produced as a response to patriarchal needs, so that women, especially young women, could be persuaded to perform self-sacrificial acts willingly. By honoring "female virtues," the system not only provides spiritual self-satisfaction for women who are required to sacrifice themselves, but also serves to alleviate men's guilty consciences for their mistreatment of the other sex.[20]

Two mothers are also applauded for their strict adherence to righteous behavior and their self-sacrifice for their sons' education.[21] In the case of *Mother Chen Instructs Her Sons in the Hall of Top Graduates (Zhuangyuantang chenmujiaozi)* (YQXWB:91–107), the accepted norms for the ideal and the significance of self-sacrifice differ so much from ours that I find it difficult to include her in the category of the virtuous. Mother Chen so anxiously aspires to produce top graduates that she mistreats her youngest son horribly until he, like his two older brothers, also attains first place in the

palace examination. No matter how perverse, the ideals exemplified by these "virtuous" characters are the messages their society needed and wanted to hear. By promoting these values, the playwright gains respectability and the audience is reassured of the values of society. Their fascination, however, seems once again to lie in the general improbability of the observance of such ideals.

While the virtuous women promote Confucian ideals by serving as positive examples, the femmes fatales fulfill the same function by being negative examples. They are used to warn men against certain types of women and situations. These evil women are petty, selfish and sly. They are never protagonists and men are warned against marriage to them. Since evil is associated with beauty, concubines who are prettier than the principal wives tend to be a source of trouble. Ex-courtesan concubines are particularly dangerous. Of the fourteen cases of evil wives, eleven are concubines and the majority of these have been prostitutes before their marriages. The name Wang Lamei seems to be standard for this stereotype.[22] These evil wives are invariably adulterous and murderous. Besides carrying on affairs with officials, servants, and even a priest, they frequently attempt to do away with their husbands.

Scheming wives who wield considerable influence over their husbands are no less dangerous than the adulterous concubines. They usually mastermind murderous schemes which eventually destroy not only their husbands/lovers but also themselves. The wives in *The Spirit Child Plays Havoc in the City of Kaifeng (Shennu'er danao Kaifengfu)* (YQX:557–576) and *Clang Clang Goes the Ghost in the Basin (Dingding dangdang pen'ergui)* (YQX:1389–1909) are the main culprits in the murders of a nephew and a traveling salesman, respectively. The husbands do the killing, but the wives are held responsible.

Jealous wives are relatively few, consisting of the queen in *Carrying a Cosmetic Case,* the wives in *Flowers in the Back Garden (Houtinghua)* (YQX:929–949) and in *Tale of the Chalk Circle (Huilanji)* (YQX:1107–1129). Like the other femmes fatales, these shrews are cruel and immoral. True to the purpose of didacticism, femmes fatales are always punished. Their intrigues are always discovered and they and their adulterers always executed.

As dangerous as marriage to an evil woman is the inherent peril of exposing one's wives or daughters to the public. This warning is demonstrated in *Judge Bao Uses Wiles to Get the Golden Pagoda (Baodaizhi zhizhuan shengjinge)* (YQX:1716–1736), *Ten Spies Play Havoc in the City of Yan'an (Shitanzi danao Yan'anfu)* (YQXWB:914–933), *Lu Zhishen Happily Bestows Favors at the Yellow Flower Valley (Lu Zhishen xishang Huanghuagu)* (YQXWB:934–948) and *Feng Yulan Weeps in a River Boat in a Moonlit Night (Feng Yulan yeyue qijiangzhou)* (YQX:1737–1755), where the husbands are either brutally beaten or killed. Unruly and murderous lechers abound and they will stop at nothing in order to possess other men's wives. Hence, many a life is lost because a husband takes his wife to a public place or ignorantly requests her to meet a lecher out of friendliness. Basically props used to promote the importance of guarding one's possessions — women in these plays are precisely that, possessions to be concealed.

A small number of wives, the enlightened ones, are used to demonstrate the value of truths which an ordinary person, especially a woman, would usually have trouble understanding. The unenlightened wives are neither evil nor necessarily stupid. They tend to follow their instincts and common sense until they finally perceive the validity of higher laws. The ideals espoused are not necessarily Confucian; although some emphasize the importance of securing a male heir for the pa-

triarchal lineage, others promote popular Daoist and Buddhist religious ideals.

They are the wives of charitable men who can't wait to rid themselves of their wealth and who, in order to accumulate merit with Heaven, help others more than members of their own families. The enlightened husbands of *Pang Jushi Mistakenly Accumulates Credit for His Future Life (Pang Jushi wufang laishengzai)* (YQX: 295–313), *Dispersing Family Wealth, Heaven Bestows a Son Upon an Old Man (Sanjiacai tiancilaosheng'er)* (YQX:365–385) and *Dispensing Charity Liu Hong Marries Off His Maid (Shirenyi Liu Hong jiabi)* (YQXWB: 808–833) are such examples. Some wives who, being sonless, either favor a daughter and son-in-law over a nephew bearing the husband's surname, as the wife in *Dispersing Family Wealth*, or chase a pregnant concubine away because of malicious gossip, as the wife in *Reunion of the Son and Daughter in the District of Kingfisher Red (Cuihongxiang ernü liangtuanyuan)* (YQX: 454–473). But in the end, they are invariably enlightened and are able to reap the benefits created by their husbands' foresight and magnanimity. The images of these women also serve to demonstrate the natural superiority of men in the comprehension of the principles which support not only the patriarchal society but also the cosmos.

Tenuously related to these female didactic examples are the numerous women who are victimized either because of their social status or because of the simple fact that they are women. They are the downtrodden prostitutes, the battered wives, the lowly concubines, the pretty girl presented as a gift to a man with a jealous wife, the loyal wife who is forced into accepting her unfaithful husband, the principal wife who must help save the husband who plotted her death with his concubine.... Like the femmes fatales, they are rarely protagonists. Unlike the ingenious, who may be victimized

but do emerge triumphant, these victims of society are foils who are not fortunate enough to serve a patriarchal cause. They exist simply to provide a setting for dramatic enactments by others. They are never allowed to triumph and seem to suffer greater degradation than the femmes fatales since their misery is not commensurate with their actions. And, despite the unfairness of their plights, the audience is made to feel that they somehow deserve, or must accept, their fates.

Hence, although such characters are not useful for didactic purposes, they affirm the values of an unjust world where the predicaments of victimized women are somehow justified.

The fact that certain characters, such as the femmes fatales and the victimized, remain secondary characters in the Yuanzaju (they may well have become protagonists in modern plays) illustrates, once again, the importance of psychological fulfillment and didacticism in these plays. The female characters who are given the limelight are either the romantic or the virtuous types who serve to fulfill their audiences' private desires or promote social ideals. Heroines solely applauded for their ingenuity are, on the other hand, rare. The talents of the romantic beauties and virtuous paragons must ultimately advance the functions required of such characters. Indeed, whether these women be intelligent, courageous, beautiful, or virtuous, their roles in Yuanzaju are only of value if they serve the ideals of either society or romance.

Notes

1. This seems to reflect the influence of Yuan drama's predecessor, the *zhugongdiao*, in which one performer both sang and narrated. In the Yuanzaju, one person continued to sing all the arias, although different people filled in the dialogues.
2. *Yuanquxuan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 4 vols.

3. *Yuanquxuan waibian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1958), 4 vols.
4. Samuel Selden, *Theatre Double Game* (Chapel Hill: The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1969).
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15. These basic needs of the theatre audience are derived from psychological studies of the role of play and games for human beings. The basic needs of the human psyche during participation in games are used to illuminate those of the theatre audience.
6. See Cai Zhongxiang, *Zhongguo gudian julun gaiyao* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmindaxue chubanshe, 1988), pp. 20–41.
7. In his study on Yuanzaju's reflections of its period, Geng Xiangyuan follows Zhong Sicheng's division (in *Luguibu, Records of the Ghosts*, the sole source book on many of the Yuanzaju playwrights) of the playwrights into early and late Yuan figures and concludes that the later plays are more didactic, i.e., prone to promoting Confucian values such as blind loyalty and filial piety. Since few plays can be traced to the later period, I find the evidence cited highly inadequate. After noting that this tendency towards promoting Confucian ethics was already present in the works of two of the early dramatists (Zheng Tingyu and Wu Hancheng), the plays of three later dramatists are cited as examples for its prevalence during the later period. Of the three playwrights cited (p. 123) however, one in fact belongs to the earlier period, according to *Luguibu*. Since many of the Yuanzaju playwrights are either anonymous or simply undatable (not mentioned in *Luguibu)*, this study will treat the entire corpus as a single unit without considerations of periodization. See Geng Xiangyuan, *Yuanzaju suofanying zhi shidai jingsheng* (Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1987).
8. Xie Tianxiang (protagonist) in *Mayor Qian Uses a Trick to Favor Xie Tianxiang (Qian Dayin zhicong Xie Tianxiang)* (YQX:141–155); Li Sulan in *The Romance Between Li Sulan and Yuhu (Li Sulan fengyue Yuhu cun)* (YQX:474–489); Li Yaxian (protagonist) in *Li Yaxian Views Flowers and Drinks Wine at the Pond of the Winding Stream (Li Yaxian huajiu qujiangchi)* (YQX:263–276); Zhang Haohao in *Du Muzhi Composes Poetry and Drinks Wine in His Yangzhou Dream (Du Muzhi shijiu Yangzhoumeng)* (YQX:794–806); Fei Yunu (protagonist) in *Tears Staining the Blue Gown of the Jiangzhou Official (Jiangzhou sima qingshanlei)* (YQX:882–899); Yuxiaonü (protagonist) in *Marriages of the Jade Flute Maiden in Two Reincarnations (Yuxiaonü liangshi yinyuan)*

(YQX:971–986); Xie Jinlian (protagonist) in *Xie Jinlian Composes Poetry and Drinks Wine Carrying a Sprig of Red Pear Flowers (Xie Jinlian shijiu honglihua)* (YQX:1080–1092); Du Ruiliang (protagonist) in *Du Ruiliang is Tricked into Being Rewarded at the Golden Thread Pond (Du Ruiliang zhishang jinxianchi)* (YQX:1251–1264); Gu Yuxiang (protagonist) in *The Tale of Jin Chuchen's Re-encounter with the Jade Comb (Jin Chuchen chongdui yushuji)* (YQX:1410–1424); He Lianlian in *The Love Story of Wang Huan at the Pavilion of a Hundred Flowers (Chengfengliu Wang Huan baihuating)* (YQX:1425–1441); Zheng Yuelian (protagonist) in *Zheng Yuelian's Dream of Cloud Window on an Autumn Night (Zheng Yuelian qiuye yunchuangmeng)* (YQXWB:782–794), Han Chulan (protagonist) in *Zhugongdiao Medleys and the Romance at the Pavilion of Purple Clouds (Zhugongdiao fengyue ziyunting)* (YQXWB:345–354).

9. Wang Liumei (Liumeier) in *Story of the Gold Coin and the Match Made by Li Taibai (Li Taibai pipei jinqianji)* (YQX:14–31); Li Yuying (protagonist) in *The Wrongly Delivered Mandarin Duck Quilt in the Monastery of Jade Purity (Yuqingan cuosong yuanyangbei)* (YQX:53–69); Li Qianjin (protagonist) in *Pei Shaojun On a Horse by the Garden Wall (Pei Shaojun qiangtou mashang)* (YQX:332–347); Qiannü (protagonist) in *Qiannü's Soul Leaves Her Body (Qiannü lihun)* (YQX:705–719); Li Yunying (protagonist) in *Li Yunying Sends a Message Via Wind on a Paulownia Leaf (Li Yunying fengsong wutongye)* (YQX:1221–1231); Miss Fei (her maid is the protagonist) in *Romance of the Scholar Aided by a Clever Maid (Zoumeixiang hanlin fengyue)* (YQX:1146–1171); Wang Yueying (protagonist) in *Story of the Shoe Wang Yueying Left On New Year's Eve (Wang Yueying yuanye liuxieji)* (YQX:1265–1279); Cheng Cailuan (protagonist) in *Qin Xiuran Listens to the Zither From the Bamboo Mound (Qin Xiuran Zhuwu tingqin)* (YQX:1442–1455); Xiao Shulang (protagonist) in *Xiao Shulang Sends Her Love Through the Tune, Pusaman (Xiao Shulang qingji Pusaman)* (YQX:1532–1541); Xu Bitao (protagonist) in *Priest Sa Reveals the Mystery of Bitao, the Peach Blossom (Sazhenren yeduan bitaohua)* (YQX:1684–1702); the protagonist in *The Love-longing Beauty at the Moon Praying Pavilion (Guiyuan jiaren baiyueting)* (YQXWB:7–17); Han Qiongying in *Fei Du Returns the Belt at the Temple of Mountain God (Shanshengmiao Fei Du huandai)* (YQXWB:18–41); Guixiang (protagonist) in *Mayor Qian Solves the Mystery of the Dream of the Pink Robe (Qian*

Dayin zhikan feiyimeng) (YQXWB:71–80); Dong Xiuying in *Dong Xiuying's Romance at the Eastern Wall (Dong Xiuying huayue tongqiangji)* (YQXWB:202–218); Cui Yingying (protagonist in the second volume of this unusual five volume play) in *Romance of Cui Yingying Waiting Under the Moon in the Western Chamber (*also known as *Romance of the Western Chamber; Cui Yingying daiyue xixiangji)* (YQXWB:259–323); Fu Jinding (protagonist) in *Zhao Kuangyi Cleverly Gets Fu Jinding (Zhao Kuangyi zhiqu Fu Jinding)* (YQXWB:981–999); Liu Yue'e (protagonist) in *Tale of Lü Mengcheng's Hovel with Wind and Snow (Lü Mengcheng fengxue poyaoji)* (YQXWB:324–336); and Meng Deyao (protagonist) in *Meng Deyao Serves Her Husband With Her Head Bowed (Meng Deyao ju'anqimei)* (YQX:914–928).

10. Chung-wen Shih points out that whereas the courtesans in the love stories originally popularized in Tang fiction, were a pitiful lot — desertion, unrequited love and even death being quite common — in the hands of the Yuan playwrights, the courtesan-scholar romance always ends happily for the lovers. See Chung-wen Shih, *The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yüan Tsa-chü* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 75–76.
11. In the Yuan play *Li Yaxian* (pp. 263–276), the problem of the protagonist's lowly status as a prostitute was never given as the reason that she could not marry her scholar lover, although it is clearly a consideration in the original Tang *chuanqi* tale. Also see *The Romance Between Li Sulan and Yuhu* (YQX:474–489). Colin Mackerras' *Chinese Theatre From its Origins to the Present Day* (Hawaii: Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 52–53, also mentions the marriage of an actress (actresses were frequently also prostitutes) to a Vice-director of the Imperial Academy. Jailbirds, however, are not allowed to marry officials. See *Tu Ruiniang* (YQX:1259).
12. Wilt Idema and Stephen West, *Chinese Theatre 1100–1450: A Source Book* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1982), pp. 168–169.
13. For examples of applause for rebellion against social strictures by romantic heroines, see Geng Xiangyuan, *Yuanzaju suofanying zhi shidai jingsheng*, p. 96, 132; and Chen Xiufang, *Yuanzaju zhong mengdeshiyong jiqixiangzhengyiyi* (National Taiwan Univ. M.A. Thesis, 1973), pp. 124–125.
    Li Chunxiang considers the freedom of choice in marriage as manifested by the romantic heroines as social criticism, revolutionary and anti-feudalistic, its idealism being an

important component of the democratic spirit in Yuan drama. See Li Chunxiang, *Yuanzaju lun'gao* (Henan: Henan daxue chubanshe, 1988), pp. 131–135.

14. All the different types of audiences described by Yoshikawa in his chapter on the audiences of Yuanzaju are male. See Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Genzatsugeki kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Book Co., 1948), chapter 1.
Idema and West add that judging from a passage from *The Water Margin*, itinerant performers hired by local gentry to perform in outlying districts attracted gambling men and farm women alike. Since such occasions must have been fairly rare, one can assume that the majority of the audience, namely those in the cities, was male. See Wilt Idema and Stephen West, *Chinese Theatre 1100–1450: A Source Book*, p. 92.
15. Correlating the needs and experiences of the playwrights to Yuan drama, Zhang Shuxiang notes that the impossibility of the romances makes them dreams or avenues of escape from reality on the part of the writers. See Zhang Shuxiang, *Yuanzaju zhongde aiqingyushehui* (Taibei: Changan chubanshe, 1980), pp. 24–26. Zhang's analysis of the Yuanzaju romantic heroines differs from that of the majority of Chinese readers in that she bases her study on the interplay of the dynamics between the centrifugal forces of love and the integrating forces of identifying with society on the part of the characters. Her protagonists, both male and female, are examined in terms of their internal polemics of either following their personal inclinations toward love or performing the demands of society. Comedy is created when conciliation occurs between love and the demands of society. This approach differs from the present study in which personal inner conflicts are irrelevant. While the actions of the romantic heroines are created to satisfy the fantasies of the audience, the demands of society refer to the promulgation of patriarchal ideals by the playwrights.
16. Geng Xiangyuan considers Qiannü less heroic and inspirational than the other maidens in romantic plays as she manages to circumvent rebelling against Confucian strictures. See Geng Xiangyuan, *Yuanzaju suofanying zhi shidai jingsheng*, pp. 128–131.
17. This view is also held by Geng Xiangyuan. See *Ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

18. Examples of this line of analysis are too numerous to cite. For a good example, see Jiao Wenbin, "Lun *Dou E Yuan*" in *Zhongguo gudian beijulun* (Xi'an: Xibei daxue chubanshe, 1990), pp. 235–260.
19. See Zhang Shuxiang, *Yuanzaju zhongde aiqingyushehui*, p. 268.
20. See Ma Sen, *Ma Sen xiju lunji* (Taibei: Erya chubanshe, 1985), pp. 47–51. This book includes two articles on *Dou E Yuan* by Ma Sen as well as an article by Tang Wenbiao (chapt. 2, pp. 17–42) who refutes Ma Sen's view and maintains that Dou E is a tragic heroine.
21. One of them, Tao Kan's mother, has been mentioned earlier.
22. In his discussion of various "Water Margin" stories in Yuan drama, Liu Jingzhi says that Wang Lamei is a stereotype of the "bad" women and that bad women did not only exist during the Yuan or the Song dynasties but have always existed, from antiquity to the present. See Liu Jingzhi, *Yuanren shuihuzaju yanjiu* (Hong Kong: Sanlian shudian, 1990), p. 201.

Chapter 4

The Vanguards — The Truncated Stage
(The Women of Lu Yin, Bing Xin, and Ding Ling)

Liu Nienling

Introduction

Lu Yin (1899–1934), Bing Xin (1900–), and Ding Ling (1904–1986) were all born around the turn of the century. All three grew up during the tumultuous era of May Fourth, when the old values were crumbling. The influence from the West blew down the crumbling Empire like a deck of collapsing cards. The men and women who lived among the rubble were then searching to rebuild their houses. Before rebuilding could commence, a new blueprint had to be drawn up. Obviously the old blueprint would not do. A new blueprint had to be found and drawn. It was indeed the time for a renaissance, an opportune time for re-evaluation and reforming. Whoever had some concern for the future of China, and therefore his or her own existence, would think hard and search in earnest for a path to the solution of the problems of finding a new blueprint.

During this time, educated women began to look closely at themselves and the meaning of their new existence and their relation to a new China which had yet to be found. One thing was certain — they could no longer live the old way of their mothers; the old ambiance and the old amenities of life were gone for them. A whole new set of living elements had to be found. A new orientation and organization of life had to be devised.

At the time, the process of searching and reorganization was also much debated. Even the kind of revolution

was the subject of violent disagreements. The success of the Soviet Revolution was a most tantalizing example. Yet, what is Marxism? Who is Bakunin? When the Pandora's box was opened, all these foreign names flew in: Darwin, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Russell, Dewey, Keats, Schiller, Goethe, and others. These names were highly regarded by the hungry young students in a romantic way. The admiration for great Western names was mixed with a deep sense of shame for China. The process of renaissance was never easy or clean. The concept of *xuechi* (wipe away shame) for the nation and the people of China was paramount in the minds of young students and intelligentsia; they were young and had a future ahead of them. It was essential for them to find a meaningful and hopeful future. They wanted none of the past, which brought them nothing but pain and shame. They knew very well it was up to them to find their new life. They thought they had the destiny of China in their hands. As China was in disarray, they were on the scene to witness and to find a course of action.

Women too had to find new roles for themselves. They were given opportunities to enter schools and even universities, and so had some equal chances to be educated as the young men of the time. Of course the women who had the best chances to take advantage of the new era were the ones who were financially and socially able. It was not a random factor that the women who embraced the new values of the time were women of literati families; however poor they might be, that kind of family did put emphasis on educating their offspring, even the girls. As in the European case, the woman's movement was started by upper class women, who were the ones with the means and the leisure to gain education and access to society. Lu Yin, Bing Xin, and Ding Ling all came from literati families which were upper-middle class in terms of wealth. Among them, Bing Xin was the

most fortunate; she was even given the chance to go abroad to study, the ultimate distinction for a modern young intellectual. All three of these vanguards of woman's transformation in the twentieth century were writers who were able to use their pens to communicate their feelings and ideas for the new era. Each reacted in her own way to the time in which she lived. And each one's reaction was tied to her upbringing in her formative years. The end results were very different.[1]

Lu Yin

Scenario

A young woman staring into empty space, mouth half-open. There are black circles underneath her eyes; her face is pallid, somewhat sallow. She appears lost and her body is leaning forward as if she is about to fall.

Or

She is sitting quite alone, writing a letter, tears streaming down her cheeks.[2]

Or

She is walking alone on the beach, the sea breeze blowing relentlessly at her; her hair flying about, her robe blown open, her body pulled forward, she stands there motionlessly. She is looking far into the distance, dazed and seemingly unaware of her own existence.[3]

Or

Four girls walking along the beach, holding hands and touching one another in a loving manner as though to console one another. There is no laughter; a sense of deep distress appears in their looks.[4] They are all college students, about to graduate. They will either marry soon or face the prospect of a career.

Lu Yin

Lu Yin often describes the women in her fiction as the women in the above described scenarios. In her essays she discusses the predicament of women in her time in a most robust manner, mincing no words and using no excuses. She writes on women in her essays in the most explicit way, in an astonishingly honest way unmatched by any other writer of her time. Lu Yin obviously understands her time and her time as a Woman. Her heightened consciousness is so modern and so passionate, so very close to the woman of our day.

Glancing down a list of titles of some of her essays will give the reader a clear sense of what she wrote about. She does not equivocate. Being unequivocal was in her time most unfeminine. A woman in her time was not supposed to be assertive about her meaning, or of course, about her wishes. She should not pin anyone down, which was unladylike. But Lu Yin writes clearly what she intends to say. Let's examine the titles of some of her essays:[5]

"The Hope for the Women's Liberation Association"
"The Problems Faced by the Women's Liberation Movement in China"
"Love is not a Game"
"The Era of the Flower Vase"
"Man and Woman"
"The Death of Ding Ling"

In the essay, "The Hope for the Women's Liberation Association," she writes:

> The tide for the women's liberation movement rises higher and higher as the days go by; this seems to be a reality now, but the reality of failures of the movement is also very real. Why is this so? It is because women themselves are not aware

> of their own predicament. Therefore, they are not able to face problems and disappointments. They fail in the end. If women themselves are not aware of their problems, how can they solve them? Instead, they turn to men who are not directly related to the problems to help them solve their problems. This is one reason for the failure of the movement.... If women are not aware of themselves, they only follow blindly; this will not help the women's movement but hinder it. I believe that the problems of women's liberation must be solved by women themselves. But the word liberation is meaningless if it is not substantiated.... There are ways to substantiate it, such as establishing women's employment agencies, women's factories, women's workshops, etc. Yet such methods are not the primary methods. Before having a career, a woman must acquire professional knowledge and expertise.... I wish my dear comrades, my sisters, will quickly solve our own problems.[6]

In her essay "The Problems faced by the Women's Liberation Movement in China," she compares Chinese women with European women in their movements. And again she stresses women's own consciousness. She writes:

> Women's Movement has become a fashionable term.... When we examine movements abroad, such as in Great Britain, Germany, France, USA, in each country the movement encounters setbacks and difficulties. If opportunities had not presented themselves, such as World War I, the movement would not have succeeded. Looking back at the movement in China, if it were going to be an easy one, that would be shocking news to us all.... France was the first country to initiate the movement, and it was founded there for very complex reasons. Though the essential motivation is based on the principle of human rights, the fundamental cause for the movement is the awareness of the

French women themselves.[7]

In this essay Lu Yin discusses the beginning of human civilization, the prehistorical social and economic organization of men and women. She examines woman's place in the past and then compares it to the present. She complains that the women's movement in China is rather meek and passive, illustrating this point by pointing out that in a group photograph taken by the founding members of the Women's Liberation Movement, two-thirds were men and only one-third were women. She asks the question: "Are Chinese men more liberated than [men in] the rest of the world? If men in China are indeed so magnanimous toward women, there is no need for a Women's Liberation Movement."[8] She expresses doubts about the motivation of the men who joined hands with women in this movement.[9]

Lu Yin's position on the Women's Liberation Movement is tied to her understanding of the economic deprivation of the underprivileged in China. She argues:

> But the problems facing women are not isolated problems. If a society is healthy, there will not be a women's problem. If the society is diseased, and we only concern ourselves with women's problems, we will not be able to solve them. Even if we have gained political rights, we will not really stand up. If we intend to liberate women, we should exert ourselves in confronting social problems, only then can society be healthy.[10]

She goes on to attack the economic injustices suffered by the exploited classes and perpetrated by the capitalists. Among the most exploited were women factory workers. She illustrates the point by saying that these women earned less than men who performed the same level of work. Women are constantly facing the dilemma of having two roles, as breadwinners and as nurturers of their children. Women laborers had to leave their homes at dawn to report to work by six o'clock. They

came home at noon to nurse their babies and to do their housework. After two hours of lunch time chores, they then rushed back to the factory and worked until six, and then again rushed back home to cook supper and care for their families — all for very meager pay. Lu Yin calls attention to the economic plight suffered by women workers and stresses that women's liberation is only a part of the economic problem:

> It is of the utmost importance in the movement to reduce working hours for workers, to adjust wages, and above all to establish equal opportunities. As always, women's employment is disadvantaged on two levels: first, women perform the same kind of work but get less pay; second, the so-called professions or jobs, despite their real economic value, are always classified as low-pay and low-value. The real reasons may be due to thousands of years of exploitation of women.[11]

Lu Yin understands the economic problems of a society pertaining to both sexes, and discusses women's problems as a part of the problems of the whole society. She emphasizes that the movement is not for the liberation of women alone, but the liberation of all the oppressed. If the oppressor is an upper-class woman who uses her husband's position and power to oppress women, she should be treated as an enemy of women. For the women's movement is not a war between two sexes but a movement based on equal opportunities. The two sexes must coexist in order to have a healthy society. If the movement is a war waged against men, then Chinese women must follow the example in *Jing Hua Yuan*, when the women in the Kingdom of Women tied up a man and made him wear women's make-up and clothing. Lu Yin finds such behavior naive and absurd.[12]

As she points out, the vast majority of women in China are illiterate and uneducated. How can individu-

als raise their consciousness when they remain in a state of ignorance? She also reminds her readers that the movement will be difficult and long drawn-out. Yet, she insists, one must move ahead.[13]

In her article entitled "The Way Out for Women," she discusses Nora's way in Ibsen's play. She says Nora's way would be hard to follow by the majority of women in China. Women had become so used to being dependent that they would not know how to find their own way in society. As a consequence, women must endure whatever injustices and indignities they suffer, with the result that women lose their personal dignity, their social position, and above all their status of human beings. This is indeed a calamity for women. Women lose their individuality by becoming household dependents. They are only allowed to be involved with the "inner" affairs of the household, and become knowledgeable only about the minute details of the household. Once a woman leaves her ambiance of a "home," she becomes lost and helpless. So she has to hide behind men to take cover, and then she is controlled and manipulated by men. Women lose their social position by staying away from social activities. They perform peripheral roles as dependents, with no major duty or responsibility toward society, no particular position in society, no privileges or social rights. Lu Yin thinks the most criminal act committed toward women is depriving them of the chance to develop as real persons. Their mentality, their psyches, and their emotions are blighted and stunted to the level of a nonperson. They are little more than domesticated animals. This is not only a loss for women but also a loss for the nation, even a loss for humanity. Lu Yin concludes that the only way out is to liberate women from their domestic and economic confinement, for them first of all to become aware of their own problem as women, to gain personal knowledge by breaking away from the bondage of tradition. They should leave

home, break away from the confines of the house. They must try to get an education. They must be economically equal and socially on the same par as men. They must not only become women in every right sense of the word; they must be women first and then persons.[14]

Lu Yin says her slogan for women is that they not only are women, they are also persons.[15] In her article "The Era of the Flower Vase," she touches upon the most essential quality of women's status in the society of her time. In the 20's and later, women entered the job market. But, if a woman is not a blue-collar worker, she is the "flower vase" of the white-collar office workers. She is not only a token worker, but a decoration piece in the office, thus a "flower vase." Lu Yin writes:

> We have to thank God, all merciful God. He has touched the arrogant hearts of men, and therefore men have liberated woman from her bondage. Today, women can lift their heads, walking along the road as flower vases. Although a woman is only a flower vase, that is better than before when she was locked behind a door to wield a broom or to produce babies.... A flower vase is a fine vessel. It can decorate a hall, a bank counter, or an office desk. It can arouse the sense of beauty in a man.... But flower vases, don't be so smug, even if you are the noble Greek vase celebrated in Keat's poem; suppose one day the admiring young men get tired of your looks...you will be shattered.
>
> If such is the fate of a flower vase, then it is too tragic. You must find a way to salvage your fate. You must discipline yourself, meditate in silence to regain your senses. The process of meditation will bring you to self-awareness. You must not foolishly wish that men will grant your wishes.... You must not fool yourself. The Era of the Flower Vase only reveals the shame and the stupidity of the human race.[16]

In this article Lu Yin puts her finger on the pulse of

her time. Women's entrance into society has only widened the scope of their exploitation by men. They only bedeck the working ambiance. Through the admiration and compliments of men, they further play into the hands of their entrappers. They adorn themselves even more and become more like flower vases. They are then too fragile to be given any real duties or responsibilities at work. It is a bondage away from the home bondage; it is an office-setting bondage for woman. Lu Yin was too perceptive to be fooled by the phony liberation of women who have walked out of their homes and into offices. This article illustrates Lu Yin's real perception and thorough understanding of women's problems. Throughout her writings, one senses that she, with heightened awareness of women's fate, must have felt frustrated and exasperated by the lack of understanding of her colleagues, both men and women, in the women's liberation movement. One begins to understand why the women in her fiction tend to be types who are either aware but too weak to take action, or who, in the end, capitulate either to marriage or death.

Bing Xin in 1923

Bing Xin

Bing Xin's women are as educated and liberated in outlook as Lu Yin's women. But Bing Xin's women are not caught between choices. They seem to have made their choices. Bing Xin's women seem happier and, though occasionally entertaining self-doubts, they are all settled in their niches, whether by their own choice or some one else's. One does not have to ana-

lyze their sorrow as Lu Yin does. Bing Xin describes her women as mild-mannered and benevolent observers, who never overstep the threshold of propriety, compassionate but not passionate.

The setting for Bing Xin's women is often a comfortable home. The hostess in Bing Xin's short story "The First Dinner Party" is a modern woman who is obviously highly educated and cultivated. She is bilingual, for she has been educated abroad. From the way she sets her dinner table, one can deduce that her education abroad was a refined one. Her servants admire the way she manages the dinner preparations, so tastefully and orderly. Her dining table glitters with glassware deserving a modern television commercial. There is a fine linen tablecloth and fine chinaware. There are perfectly placed name cards, with the guest of honor properly seated on the left of the hostess. Bing Xin's hostess is well versed in such Western etiquette. When her husband returns with the foreign guest of honor, he is struck by the beauty of the room arrangement. He stares into his wife's eyes with love and gratitude; only a Western educated man would look at his wife this way. The most symbolic item in the setting is the finely-crafted silver flower pot, a family heirloom, given as a wedding gift by her ailing mother.[17] It represents the continuity of a privileged family line. Bing Xin's women are women of privilege. The general plight of women is never evident in her heroines. Instead, they are pampered by their parents and husbands as precious jewels. They have the best of both worlds, as traditional and as liberated women.

The problem faced by a Bing Xin woman is often a choice between two attractive alternatives. In the "First Dinner Party," the protagonist is torn between her love for her dying mother and her new husband, who has just returned from his successful studies abroad. The dilemma she faces is a conflict of loves. She wants to be

a loving daughter; she also wants to be a loving wife. It is not even a question of duties, between the filial duty of a daughter and the duty of a wife, for she is a modern woman brought up in a liberal fashion. Rather, the conflict is between her devotion to her mother and her love for her husband. When she finds the silver flower pot in her luggage while unpacking after returning from her visit to her ailing mother, she is devastated. Her mother was dying, yet she had somehow struggled to get up and pack the silver flower pot secretly in her daughter's suitcase. The discovery upset her so much that she was almost unable to carry on with the preparations for the dinner party. But these preparations are an expression of her love for her husband. Her husband's professor from the USA, who has just arrived in Beijing, had been like a father to her husband while he was pursuing his Ph.D. It was out of loving gratitude that she wanted to make the dinner party a memorable evening for this old professor. Her dilemma is thus a result of so much love in her life, her love for her mother and for her husband, and her concern for the visiting foreign guest, her husband's surrogate father while he was studying abroad. She has lived a charmed life, and the distress she experiences was brought about by so many gentle and civilized concerns.

This woman has led a life on a totally different plane from the women of Lu Yin and Ding Ling. She does not have to struggle for survival. Her struggle is with her own delicate feelings. She may be leading a truly feminine life according to the traditional view; yet her psyche is a most humane and modern one, and her problem is the modern problem of personal choice, of freedom of personal choice. She is free to choose, and she has chosen the life of a lady. When she married, her mother had lamented that she had not been married in a proper way with a proper dowry, but her father had answered that the dowry he had given his daughter was

a solid education. The protagonist had been brought up in a modern way for a modern Chinese daughter, and she had not been forced into an arranged marriage. She had married out of love, of her own free choice. And so it makes sense that this very modern Chinese daughter is torn by a modern torment.

In another short story entitled "West Wind," another modern Chinese young woman faces another modern problem. The title obviously refers to the influence of Western culture. The protagonist meets her former lover on a boat trip to Shanghai, where she is going for a conference. The man is returning to his family. He had married shortly after her refusal of his proposal; she had remained unmarried. While on the boat she recalls the old dilemma, the old feeling and agony she experienced when she had had to make a choice between marriage and career. She had been fond of this man; yet she had made her choice and remained single. When he shows her the family photo of his wife and children, she cannot help feeling a tinge of regret. Later he mentions how sweet it would have been if ten years ago she had made a different decision, and the remark makes her sleepless for the next few nights. Bing Xin paints a picture of a lonely woman. When the boat docks in Shanghai, he is met by his pretty young wife and his two children, who warmly hug their father, while she stands quite alone leaning against the ship railing watching them from a distance. The westerly wind blows against her delicate figure, as she waits for them to leave the dock before disembarking herself. The story ends:

> The passengers had almost all disembarked. The people on the dock had gradually dispersed. Qiuxin picked up her luggage and slowly walked down from the boat. For a while, she stood on the wharf, looking at the gloomy scene around her. A gust of west wind swept across her blank face, and then, with a rustling sound, blew scattered pieces of

straw and paper along the wharf, dancing and flying over the ground.[18]

The heroine's name is Qiuxin, meaning Autumn Heart, which, along with the story's title, "West Wind," reveal to the reader what Bing Xin wants to say. Autumn symbolizes the passing of summer, or the prime of one's life. The west wind is obviously Western culture. The famous literary magazine *West Wind* in the 30's meant exactly the same.

The story is written from the perspective of an objective, impartial bystander, with no strong feeling for either choice of the protagonist. There is none of Lu Yin's passion here. The tone is tastefully controlled, not sentimental or provocative. Bing Xin is a lady even in her writing. The writer is so skillful that she never lets her own biases intrude upon her art. Bing Xin is a sophisticated artist. She never hurries or rushes to a conclusion. She is too refined to appear ruffled. The problems faced by her women are not life-and-death ones. They are about living, not existence. Bing Xin's women may be feeling sad, or even distressed; but their joys are gentle and their sadness mild. Her women are intelligent, wise, and cultivated. Bing Xin admires them. She writes with respect for her women, not with Lu Yin's pity or Ding Ling's anger. The irony in Bing Xin's women is that they seem so gentle but not meek, so traditional but not conservative, so reticent but not shy. They are bluestockings like Virginia Wolfe's women. The men around them tend to respect them, not to pamper them like children. They are even emotionally superior to men, since the men seem to be dependent upon them for emotional strength. Sometimes they are the benevolent rulers of men's emotions.

During wartime in inner China, Bing Xin wrote a collection of prose under the title *About Women*, using the nom de plume Nanshi (A Gentleman). The book, published in Chongqing in 1945, is a study of women

narrated by and through the eyes of a man who is obviously an admirer of all his women characters. It was very interesting to find stories about women by Nanshi, the Man, though it soon became known that the author was not a man but Bing Xin.

In "My Student," Nanshi writes about his student who grew up in Australia, a very Westernized Chinese girl, named S. She began to learn Chinese when she was seventeen. She was assigned to Nanshi as his student because Nanshi was an English speaking teacher of Chinese literature. She was a very lively and active girl. She played seriously and studied seriously. She seemed to enjoy all her experiences, sad and joyful. She later married wisely a scholarly collegemate, a geologist. The story traces S from girlhood to young womanhood. During the war, she washed her laundry in the village stream like other village women. She was a very adaptable and well-adjusted person. But she died from giving blood to a sick woman. She was a true heroine to Nanshi.

In "My Landlady," Nanshi encounters his landlady in Paris. She is a French aristocrat and a spinster. In the story Mademoiselle R discusses the demands upon a woman and the reason why she is still single. She says that she is a very womanly woman and thus demands the most for a woman. She expects her demands could never be met for the very reason that she is also an individual. She is a writer. In order to marry, being a woman, she would have had to sacrifice her career as a writer. She mentions to Nanshi the book *All Passion Spent* by V. Sackville-West. She believes a woman would lose on three counts when getting herself married. She would have to sacrifice one of the following three: her career, her health, or her family. All three conflict with one another. Nanshi argues that a woman must have love above all things. Her reply is that of all things love is the most ethereal.

In "The Mother of My Friend," the Mother advises her son's lover to leave him, for he is not only married but a father of three fine sons. The reason given by the old lady is that the other woman is a person with fine qualities who deserves the best from life. The son's lover finally leaves and joins the army to fight the Japanese. The old woman describes her admiration for the young woman's courage and determination and is even a little angry when she finds out that her son is not very much bothered by his lover's departure. Her son's calmness at his lover's departure makes the mother wonder about the discrepancy between a man and a woman. Nanshi concludes that the old mother has done the only right thing by suggesting to her son's lover to leave her son.

In "My Neighbor," the woman is a loser. Her husband objected to her pursuing a writing career, and she has submitted to her husband's wish. When the family needed some extra cash, she went out to teach; but, she had to give up the teaching job when her husband again objected. She feels she has let her parents down by giving up her literary career. She tells Nanshi that she "makes the fire in the stove, rinses the rice, washes the vegetables, sews the shoes and mends the socks. In her heart she feels as empty and dead as a piece of dried wood."

In "Zhang Sao," Nanshi tells the story of a woman servant. She is actually not a servant, but a very capable woman who has been helping around in the neighborhood. She washes clothes, mends them, and irons them. She delivers the mail, and takes away garbage. She is a jack-of-all-trades. Later she gives birth to a healthy son, delivering the baby herself. Soon after she gets up to go to work in the fields. After her work in the fields is done at sundown she returns home to cook for her husband and child. Nanshi tries to tell her husband to work in the fields himself. The husband replies that his wife is the capable one; so she has to go out to earn

a living also. The husband says that no one would hire him anyway, even if he tried. The woman Zhang is the superwoman of Nanshi's stories.[19]

All the above stories are told as tales about extraordinary women and their very ordinary lives. Bing Xin deliberately used the nom de plume of a man to write about these legendary women. Their mediocre lives all seem to be related to their lot as women, in spite of their very outstanding capacities as human beings and as potential professionals. They could have been managers, writers, professors, or engineers and scientists, if given the chances men had. Bing Xin was perhaps trying to depict the inordinate strength of these women even when confined to obscurity. The indomitable spirit of women will shine through no matter how low their status may be.

Ding Ling

Ding Ling's woman is a woman in every sense of the word. She is a woman of flesh and blood, not just a figure wearing clothes of silk or cotton. Ding Ling's women are sensuous. Before Ding Ling's time, no woman writer had written the way she did. She does not idolize or romanticize woman; her women are quite real.

Ding Ling and her husband, Chen Ming

Of all the women Ding Ling knew, her own mother influenced her the most. Her book on her mother is not about an idolized woman. When she submitted the manuscript of *Mother*, she included a photo of her mother. The editors at the publishers were puzzled about the photo of her mother. It was

a photo of a young woman in a long silk gown sitting beside a weaving loom. The editors thought the photo was painted. Such a lady would usually never touch a loom in her entire life, judging from her class, since Ding Ling's mother was from a wealthy literati family. When asked about the photo, Ding Ling explained it was indeed a real photo, though her mother deplored posing for a photo because she thought photos should be of life in action.[20]

This incident illustrated to readers the kind of woman Ding Ling's mother had been. She was a woman with her own mind, who made her own choices. She was a very active and progressive woman for her time. As was usual for her class, she had been educated by a tutor alongside her brothers. By being an active and intelligent student, she was a most remarkable young woman. She knew how to draw, to play the flute, to write poetry, and to play chess. After the death of Ding Ling's father, her mother went to a normal school for women and then seriously pursued a career as an educator. Ding Ling and her brother were put into the hands of caring relatives, for, though their mother was devoted, her studies prevented her from taking care of her children herself. She had a very clear idea of her priorities. She became an avant-garde woman educator in her own town. She was also the founder and organizer of one of the earliest women's associations, becoming the chairwoman of that association in 1918. She was active in educating village women, not only to make them literate but also to teach them trades such as weaving, sewing and other crafts. She also founded various schools for women, and she was the first to found a cooperative educational school for women.[21] She was an innovator and an able manager of whatever organization she helped to found.

Being the daughter of such an accomplished mother, Ding Ling did not create women characters who were

fair damsels in distress or ladies by the fireside. In "Mengke" and "Sophia's Diary," the women are all modern women of the 20th century, young liberated women who, for the first time, express without ambiguity their desire for sexual love. There are no qualms about such confessions in Ding Ling's writing. Sophia writes in a way a man would talk about a woman he desired. She is direct and honest to herself in her pining for a man's physical attractions. She writes in her diary:

> For what am I after all? It is difficult to say. Of course, I have not yet admitted to myself that I have fallen in love with that tall man. Yet in my heart there are feelings for him which are difficult to analyze. He is tall, has a rosy complexion, soft glances, and a most desirable mouth. He is attractive to many girls who like good looks and his elegant manner can cause sentimental women to swoon."[22]

The passage above is a truly sensual description of an object of sexual desire. In this case, the object is a man, appreciated by a woman. This way of writing was unheard of at the time and is still unusual in China today. Ding Ling was daring beyond her time. Yet only in the early 20th century could she write in such a way. Later, she did not write along such lines. In her early writings, Ding Ling's women are not caricatures; one can almost smell her women when reading about them. In her time, an act of passion was also an act of rebellion and revolution. Love and revolution are intimate bedfellows in the lives of Ding Ling's women.

Ding Ling's most important piece of writing on women is her essay "Thoughts on March Eighth Woman's Day,"[23] dated March 8, 1942. Although she later modified her position in this essay,[24] it is nevertheless very clear that at the time she understood exactly what she was saying. Her understanding of the state of women is different from Lu Yin's. Lu Yin expressed her under-

standing in an intellectual and socioeconomical way. Ding Ling's understanding is more intuitive and more comprehensive. She understands women as women should be. Her understanding is humanly comprehensive, coming from her experience as lover, wife, mother, widow, writer, and woman-comrade. In this essay she raises the question "when will the two characters *fu nü* (women) no longer attract any special attention, no longer be specially regarded?"[25] She notes that currently a woman-comrade's marriage will as a rule attract attention, be talked about and criticized. A woman must get married; if she does not, she will be maligned by rumors and gossip. In Yan'an a married woman faced the dilemma of whether to choose the path "Nora returns home" or to abandon her children to the care of some one else. If she did not raise her own children, a woman comrade could have the luxury of attending the weekly dance, but she would face the danger of being the object of gossip. No matter where she went and no matter what she wore, shoes or sandals, she would be the object of talk and criticism. If she was too feminine, then she must be bourgeois and politically backward.[26]

As a rule a woman's divorce attracts attention, Ding Ling wrote. Usually the breakup of a marriage was largely blamed on the faults of the woman, she being more suspected of being politically inadequate and backward. A woman in Yan'an had to endure all the trials and errors of being a woman; some decided to have their uteruses removed in order to avoid the pitfall of being a woman; how could they carry on the task of revolution when they became pregnant or mothers. If a woman refused to give birth, she was denigrated as a coward or insufficiently revolutionary. Yet she knew that if she became a mother, her lot would be no better. She would be forever at fault, whether a spinster or a mother.[27] For a woman-comrade it was a no-win situation. Ding Ling wrote:

> I am myself a woman. I understand better a woman's shortcomings. But, I understand even better a woman's sufferings. We do not transcend our era; we are not the Ideal, nor are we made of steel. We cannot resist temptation (seduction) and silent oppression. We, each of us, have a story of tears to tell. We once had noble emotions.... I regard woman's deprivation with compassion and empathy. I wish men, especially highly placed men of authority, together with women, will regard the fallen woman within the context of social ills. We should not indulge ourselves with empty talk. We should face real problems; theory should not be disconnected from realities.[28]

In this essay, Ding Ling shows real compassion for her woman-comrades by advocating ways of taking care of oneself as a woman. She advocates healthcare and sanitation for women and a happy lifestyle for women. She advises that women should study and improve their minds. Also, she says that a woman should be firm in her pursuits, be cool and emotionally strong, be single-minded and steadfast in life.[29] Ding Ling concludes this essay with a most revealing footnote, in which she says that she has not written everything she wanted to say. If the points she has made were to be made by a leader in a big conference, they would be wholeheartedly accepted. But made by her, a woman, they probably can be readily dismissed. However, since she has made these remarks, she will publicize them and pass them along to readers.[30]

By 1983, Ding Ling's position on woman had somewhat altered. She wrote in her memoir of her travels in the United States that because of her essay "Thoughts on March Eighth Woman's Day," she often encountered questions about women's status. When this question arose, she explained that China is a socialist state where women enjoy complete equality with men. She said she was often mistaken as a feminist. She admit-

ted the essay had brought much criticism upon her, even in later decades. She explained to her foreign friends that in China there was no women's movement such as the feminist movement in the United States. In China there was only the Women's Federation, which was not a feminist organization. She admitted that women's problems still exist in China, but said that, on the whole, women enjoy more respect in China than in Western societies. She mentioned that there was no more prostitution, no more burlesque, and no pornography. She argued that women in China were no longer exploited in such commercial ways.[31]

It is significant that Ding Ling became defensive about the "March Eighth" essay. After suffering so much and undergoing so much criticism and abuse on account of the "March Eighth" essay, as she admitted in New York in 1981, she had withdrawn from the more courageous stand she had taken in 1942. Granted that the situation of women has improved since 1942, still, she denied her position as a feminist and that her essay had embraced a feminist position. Her modification or even rejection of her earlier stand may indicate that she had eventually succumbed to pressure from the Party. It is most unfortunate that so courageous and so talented a woman warrior had to be cut down in size.

Conclusion

From the descriptions of women by Lu Yin, Bing Xin, and Ding Ling, we have heard the basic underlying tone in the early decades of the century, though voiced by three different persons. Bing Xin would be the soprano, singing on the feminine level; Ding Ling and Lu Yin are contralto or alto, singing in a different key. The women of Bing Xin are modern women, Western educated upper-class women; they still fall into the traditional roles of women by being hostesses, or breaking the mold by being single career women. Yet married or not, there

were single women in China's history in the past, for a single has been a woman who lives by her own means, who is not altogether socially accepted by polite society. Bing Xin's women are basically women who have chosen their roles with no conscious protest. They have accepted their fate as either modern-style Western-fashion hostesses or modern-style Western-fashion career women. Though a break from the past and more Western than traditional Chinese, their roles have been chosen without overt consciousness of being women. These women accept their fate as a matter of course, without any complaints or discontent. Their fate is to accept whatever befalls them, either marriage or career, but not both. They have chosen, and they do not protest the rigidity of their chosen roles, or the rigidity of their choosing either one or the other, but not both.

Being well-educated and well-brought up, Bing Xin's ladies have to contemplate their existence in silence. They are not supposed to make waves or voice any discontent. They must behave properly; even in their Western middle-class morality, they are required to do so. They either choose dowry or education from their fathers, and later, they choose between marriage or career. They live by the rules and regulations of the social etiquette of upper-middle class society. The only thing new in Bing Xin's women is their being Westernized and contemporary. It was then fashionable to be Western. Bing Xin's women are upper-middle class women and they have to behave as ladies.

Lu Yin's call for consciousness raising and for organizing a women's movement by and for women is the most iconoclastic of these three women writers. But her efforts were truncated by her early death. Lu Yin was the only one among the three who had a clear idea of the state of being a woman. She was the social scientist of the three, who understood the philosophical and socioeconomical nature of women's fate. She understood

woman as a social being and could clearly articulate the problems of woman as a socioeconomic member of society. Although she was the social scientist, she was not yet a political activist as Ding Ling was. Lu Yin was in many ways an intellectual observer of the state of being a woman. She had a comprehensive understanding of what is so-called Woman.

Ding Ling was the artist. Her life was iconoclastic mostly due to her romantic and artistic temperament. Her political involvement was largely due to her association with men as lover or wife. Being an artist, she was fiercely original, including her approach to life in general. She was independent both as a person and as a woman, and her women characters show the same traits, being romantic radicals living the lives of rebels. For her women, revolution and love go hand in hand. She was conscious of the plight of women not as a social scientist but as a compassionate sister, disturbed by the suffering and injustice endured by women. But, because she also had to capitulate occasionally to the men she loved and admired, her efforts toward the liberation of women were not consistent. Her deference to the Party as a Party member also undermined her independent spirit. From time to time she had to subdue her stand to Mao Zedong. Although she continued to fight and to write about women as in "Thoughts on March Eighth Woman's Day," her efforts were truncated by her imprisonment in a labor camp for twenty years.

These three women were vanguards in their time, however different they were in their approaches and styles. Each represents a break from the continuous mode of existence of women in China. Each represents a way of expression in the new era of transformation. Each reacted differently to the calling of her time. Their efforts to reexamine and to recreate the roles of women during this new era of transformation were not an organized effort. Each was in her own niche. Although Lu

Yin called for organizing a women's movement by and for women, her death buried that one lone voice of a real call for a movement, the one lone voice clearly delineating the problems of women and identifying the problems faced by women in the new era. She identified the Being of a Woman. However poignantly Bing Xin described women's dilemma, she did it in her own individual way. She was too ladylike to call for organized action. Ding Ling was daring beyond her era, but she was too romantic and too tactless. She was a feminine troublemaker, not a politician, and her voice was suppressed by Party leaders. None of the three women were true politicians. Though conscious of the fate of modern women, they were individual voices. Before they actually made waves, they were cut off, by death in Lu Yin's case, by convention in Bing Xin's case, and by politics in Ding Ling's case.

Biographical Notes

Lu Yin was born in 1899 in Fujian province. Her father was a *juren*, a literati-official. She graduated from Peking Women's Normal University, where Lu Xun once taught, the predecessor of the present Peking Normal University. In 1921 she joined the Literature Research Society and became an activist writer. After graduation from the University she worked as a teacher in various middle schools in Shanghai and Fuzhou. Her most famous novel is *Old Friends by the Sea*. She briefly visited Japan, and as a result of her trip there she produced *Notes From Tokyo*. Her first husband, whom she married in 1912, died from illness in 1925. She remarried in 1930 in Tokyo and died from childbirth in 1934. Her second husband died in 1979.

From all accounts Lu Yin was an abused child. The first daughter after several brothers, she was born on the day of her maternal grandmother's death, so that her birth prevented her mother from paying her last

respects to her own mother, for which her mother never forgave her. She was brought up in the countryside by a wet nurse. When she was finally returned to her parents, she was loathed by them because she was a sickly and weeping child. Her father once almost threw her into a river, but she was saved by a bystander. Later she was sent to a missionary school for the poor and abandoned. If her older brother had not befriended her and become her protector, she would never have become a writer. Because of having been an abused child, she was a very melancholy young girl, but she was blessed with a strong constitution and a strong intellect which sustained her through many disasters.

During her university days, Hu Shi was launching the *baihua* Movement. Inspired by the modernist trend of the era, she became more and more involved in the May 4th Movement. She also started to write. She divided her writing career into three periods: the period of sentimentality — *Old Friends by the Sea*, "Manli," and others; the period of transition — "Wild Geese Returning," "Love Letters"; the period of exploration — "The Woman's Heart" and "The Diary of A Mistress."

She was baptized when in the missionary school for the poor, and, although she soon left the church, she claimed her belief in Christ had helped her to weather the crises in her life. She also believed in some other religious teachings, such as honesty and integrity. She reported that she embraced certain masculine values and that she never liked to play with little girls' toys. She hated crowds and relished solitude; she formed deep relations with women throughout her life. With a weakness for *mahjong*, she believed that the real face of a person came out when gambling.

Bing Xin was born in Fujian in a literati family. Her father was an admiral in the navy who probably had some Western education. For some years, she was the only daughter. She was taught the classics by her ma-

ternal uncle, and therefore received a solid classical education. As she described herself, she was a lonely child living by the sea, making friends with sailors and collecting sea shells on the beach. Her uncle belonged to a revolutionary group and later became a member of the Nationalist Party, so from early childhood she was exposed to the politics of her time, for her uncle had meetings in her father's house, and from such meetings she was instilled with a sense of patriotism. Being the daughter of a military man, she was aware of the threats to China's sovereignty, aware of the enemies from without. During the 1911 Revolution the family moved to her grandfather's home in Fuzhou. Her grandfather had a library full of books which enticed her to read there all day long, and she was the favorite of her grandfather. Both her parents were learned. She often read beside her mother, who was an avid reader of avant-garde magazines.

In Beiping, she studied at the Beiman Girls' Middle School, a well-known missionary school for well-to-do girls. From that school she learned English and Western culture. She later enrolled in Yenching University, where she became active in student government and served as a secretary to the student association. Through the encouragement of her cousin, she began to write and publish while a college student. In 1923 she went abroad to study at Wellesley College, majoring in literature. She continued to write journals and corresponded with friends back in China. She modestly called her writings "children's literature," in which she extolled Mother's Love and Children's Innocence. Her collection of letters to children became the famous *Letters to Little Readers*, which was popular among school children throughout China. Ba Jin was one of her faithful readers. After her return to China, she married the noted sociologist Wu Wenzhao. Both taught in various Chinese universities.

Ding Ling, a controversial figure in Chinese politics and literature for half of a century, was known to many, in and outside China. Born in 1904 in Hunan, she became a radical and romantic writer in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Following the death of her first husband Hu Yeping, who was a Communist, she was imprisoned by the Kuomintang. Having been freed, she went to Yan'an, where she was treated as an influential celebrity. Her fame reached its peak in 1951, when she received the Stalin Prize for literature. Later she spent twenty years of exile in "thought reform." Reinstated by the Chinese Communist Party in 1978, she became more or less a spokesperson for the existing regime. She died in Beijing in 1986, survived by her second husband Chen Ming, her daughter Jiang Zuhui, a ballerina, and a granddaughter.

Notes

1. For a comprehensive survey of the May 4th movement, see Chow Tse-tsung, *The May 4th Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960. About women writers during the May 4th period, see Yi-tsi Feuerwerker, "Women as Writers in the 1920s and 1930s," in Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke, eds., *Women in Chinese Society*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975. About Chinese writers and their works in the 1920s and 1930s, Su Xuelin has written a unique book, *Ersanshi Niandai Zuojia yu Zuopin* (Writers and Their Works in the 1920s and 1930s), Taibei: Guangdong Chubanshe, first published in 1979, reprinted 1980. Su herself is a writer-scholar and knows personally most of the writers of the period under her study. The book surveys a very large number of writers, including women writers.
2. "Old Friends by the Sea" (*Haibin Guren*), in *Selected Writings of Lu Yin* (*Lu Yin Xuanji*), Fuzhou: Fujian Renmin Chubanshe, 1985. This story is included in several collections of Lu Yin's writings, for example, *Haibin Guren*, Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1925. Concerning Lu Yin's life, one may consult *Lu Yin Zhuan* (A Biography of Lu Yin), by Xiao Feng, Beijing: Beijing Normal University Press, 1982; *Lu Yin Zizhuan* (Lu Yin's Autobiography), Shanghai: The First

Publishing Co., 1934 first edition.

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. For a sympathetic and scholarly discussion of Lu Yin's life and works, see Yan Shunde ed., *Zhongguo Xiandai Nüzuojia* (Women Writers of Modern China), Vol. 1, Harbin: Heilongjiang Chubanshe, 1983, pp. 253–280. At least one of Lu Yin's stories has been translated into English, see Jennifer Anderson & Theresa Munford translated, "Factory Girl" in *Chinese Women Writers*, Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1985, pp. 84–94. It is evident from the story that Lu Yin was sympathetic toward the hardships of factory girls. For a scholarly study of factory girls, see Emily Honig, *Sisters and Strangers: Women in the Shanghai Cotton Mills, 1919–1949*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986.
6. "Hope for the Women's Liberation Association," in Lu Yin Xuanji. pp. 3–4.
7. "The Problems Faced by the Women's Liberation Movement in China," in Lu Yin Xuanji, pp. 16–17.
8. Ibid., pp. 22–23.
9. Ibid., p. 23.
10. Ibid., p. 24.
11. Ibid., pp. 26–27.
12. Ibid., p. 27.
13. Ibid., pp. 27–28.
14. "The Way Out for Women," ibid., pp. 29–30.
15. Ibid., p. 31.
16. "The Era of the Flower Vase," ibid., pp. 51–52. For documents on women's problems during the May 4th period, see *Wusi Shiqi Funü Wenti Wenxuan* (Selected Essays on Women's Problems during the May 4th Period), compiled by the Women's Association of China, Beijing: Joint Publishing Co., 1981. There are a number of books in Chinese which provide general discussions of women's activities during the 1920s and 1930s for example, Liu Jucai, *Zhongguo Jindai Funü Yundong Shi* (A History of Women's Liberation Movements in Modern China), Beijing: Zhongguo Funü Chubanshe, 1989. "Lu Yin — A Sentimental Novelist" (*Shuging de Xiaoshuojia — Lu Yin*), by Yang Yi, in *Essays on New Literature* (Xinwenxue luncong), No. 1, 1983, Beijing, gives a succinct and sympathetic analysis of Lu Yin's life and writings. "Lu Yin and Bing Xin were alike [in several ways]. Both were glorious women writers during the May 4th period. Both were born in Fujian. Both started creative writ-

ing when they were students. Both at first used fiction to probe life. However, in styles and tones, their novels are quite different. Bing Xin's novels are filled mostly with air of spring, while Lu Yin's novels are mostly surrounded by air of autumn. In poetry and prose, Lu Yin is not as good as Bing Xin; however, in fiction, Lu Yin's achievements are greater than Bing Xin, and by no means inferior. Lu Yin experienced much sadness in her own life, and her stories are sad songs of the unfortunate. Lu Yin said herself that she had used characters in her stories 'as symbols of myself.'" p. 147.

17. "The First Dinner Party," written in 1929, has been included in a number of collections of Bing Xin's writings, for example, *Bing Xin Duanpian Xiaoshuo Xuan* (Collection of Bing Xin's Short Stories), Shanghai: Kaiming Bookstore, 1943, is the edition I have consulted. This story is translated by Jeff Book and included in *The Photograph*, which is a collection of Bing Xin's writings, published by Panda Books of Beijing, 1992.
18. *Binq Xin Duanpian Xiaoshuo Xuan*, pp. 287–303. A masterful translation of "West Wind" by Samuel Ling is included in the excellent anthology *Born of the Same Roots: Stories of Modern Chinese Women*, edited by Vivian Ling Hsu, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981. This story is also included in *The Photograph*.
19. As C. T. Hsia says in *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction: 1917–1957*, pp. 71–72, "Ping Hsin represents the sentimental tradition in Chinese literature. If there had been no Literary Revolution, she would still have emerged as a poet and prose writer of some importance; most probably, she would have been much happier and more productive under the old dispensation." The story "Zhang Sao" has also been translated by Samuel Ling, in *Born of the Same Roots*. As Samuel Ling says, "The term *sao* designates the wife of one's old brother, but is also loosely applied to any middle-aged woman in informal, familiar address," p. 56.
20. In 1932 Ding Ling wrote the novel *Mother*, part of which is translated and included in *I Myself Am A Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, edited by Tani E. Barlow with Gary Bjorge, Boston: Beacon Press, 1989. For an in-depth study of Ding Ling, see Yi-tsi Mei Feuerwerker, *Ding Ling's Fiction: Ideology and Narrative in Modern Chinese Literature*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983. Of all Chinese women writers, Ding Ling is probably the best known abroad

and most written about within and outside China. This is supported by the book *Ding Ling Yanjiu zai Guowai* (Studies of Ding Ling outside China), compiled by Sun Juizhen and Wang Zhongchen, consisting of bibliographies and research essays, with 602 pages, Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 1985.

21. Ding Ling, *Mother*, Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1980, pp. 1–2, 117.
22. *Collected Writings of Ding Ling*, Shanghai: Chunming Shudian, 1947, pp. 57–58. For insightful analysis of Ding Ling as a person and as a writer, see C. T. Hsia, *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, pp. 262–272.
23. *Collected Writings of Ding Ling*, Vol. 4, Changsha: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 1983, pp. 388–392.
24. Ibid., pp. 535–537.
25. Ibid., p. 388.
26. Ibid., p. 390.
27. Ibid., p. 389.
28. Ibid., p. 391. The essay "Thoughts on March Eighth Woman's Day" is included in *I Myself Am A Woman: Selected Writings of Ding Ling*, edited by Tani W. Barlow with Gary J. Bjorge, pp. 316–321.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid., p. 392.
31. Ibid., pp. 535–537. For a chronological bibliography of Ding Ling's writings, see "Bibliography of Ding Ling" (*Ding Ling Shumu*), compiled by Ye Xiaoshen and Yao Mingqiang, in *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenyi Ziliao Conqkan*, No. 6 (April 1981), Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, pp. 314–325; and "An Addition to the Bibliography of Ding Ling" (*Ding Ling Shumu Buyi*), by Yan Zhao, in *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenyi Ziliao Conqkan*, No. 7 (January 1983), p. 94. In addition to *I Myself Am A Woman*, there are other English translations of Ding Ling's writings, for example, W. J. F. Jenner trans., *Miss Sophie's Diary and Other Stories*, Beijing: Panda Books, 1985. Two short stories by Ding Ling, "A House in Qingyun Lane" and "New Year," are included in *Chinese Women Writers*, translated by Jennifer Anderson and Theresa Munford. Concerning Ding Ling's life and writings, one may also consult Chang Jun-mei, *Ting Ling: Her Life and Work*, Taibei: Institute of International Relations, 1978.

Chapter 5

New Woman vs. Old Mores: A Study of Woman Characters in Ba Jin's Torrents Trilogy

Tsung Su

Historical Background

The 1930s, in the history of modern Chinese literature, are what the late 18th century is to German literature, a time of great intellectual turmoil and creative vitality. During the so-called *sturm und drang*, or Storm and Stress period in German literature, literary giants like Goethe, Schiller, Lenz and others rebelled against conventional artistic and moral standards. During the Chinese version of Storm and Stress in the 1930s, literary greats like Lu Xun, Lao She, Ba Jin, Cao Yu, Mao Dun and legions of others rebelled against the old language, old ethics, conventions, superstitions, and beliefs. Previously, in 1919, Chen Duxiu declared in the *New Youth:* "Because we esteem Mr. Democracy, we are against Confucianism, chastity, old ethics, and old politics; because we esteem Mr. Science, we are against old literature and old national culture."

So the New Culture Movement was launched. The patriotic May 4th Movement in 1919 combined forces with the New Culture Movement, giving birth to the era of unparalleled intellectual dynamism and creative activities known as the modern Chinese Renaissance. This great era of rebellion as well as self-creation was also a period in which Western thought, philosophy, literature, and science were introduced on a large scale. The Western concepts of liberty, human rights, individualism, women's rights, as well as the ideas of the Ibsenian

New Woman and Tolstoian humanism were the prevailing rage of the time. The writers of the 1930s, being the direct and inevitable Heirs Apparent of the May 4th Movement, were increasingly conscious of the inequities and indignities Chinese women of generations past had suffered, and most of them became ardent champions of human rights in general and of women's rights in particular. Confucianism, the chief target of *New Youth*, had ruled China for more than two thousand years, permeating the fabric of society. As an applied philosophy and way of life, it inevitably exerted great influence on the national psyche and literary consciousness. Women, according to Confucian tenets, were to assume the submissive and unobtrusive roles of daughter, wife, and mother. In these roles, self-sacrifice, devotion, chastity, and obedience were the proclaimed and acclaimed womanly virtues and duties. The code of conduct for women was succinctly summarized as the Three Obediences and Four Virtues (*sancong side*), which, incidentally but not surprisingly, coincides with the Code of Manu of ancient India, which dictates that a woman when young, should obey her father, when married, her husband, when widowed, her son.

The Confucian Three Obediences and Four Virtues shackled Chinese women and reduced them to a lesser status for more than two thousand years. Chinese history and Chinese literary classics are replete with stories which extol women who observed *sancong side* and denounce those who transgress this moral code. Thus, according to the cultural ideology of traditional China, a virtuous woman is a self-abnegating woman whose sole purpose in life is to obey, to serve, and to please.

But with the advent of the new era, the status of women, in real life as well as in fiction, underwent dramatic and painful transformation. Over all, literary works of the 1930s presented women positively and sympathetically. Women were depicted either as victims

of traditional ideas and practices, or as fiery rebels against social conventionalism and family bondage. They were, for the first time, regarded as men's equals not only in intellect, but in courage and ability as well. They make repeated appearances in the works of all major writers of the 1930s, such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, Ding Ling, Ba Jin and many others.

Torrents Trilogy: *Family*

In Ba Jin, the New Woman, or the Woman Warrior, is often portrayed alongside the Woman-as-Victim. In his Torrents Trilogy, the New Women regrettably are outnumbered by Women-as-Victims. This tells less of the author's creative modus operandi than the times and milieu in which he was writing. In the Epilogue of the 1931 edition of *Family*, the first novel of the Trilogy, Ba Jin says the book is his version of 'J'accuse' against a decaying social system, under which individuals', especially young people's happiness was sacrificed because of feudalistic practices, social conformism, sexism, superstitions, and unchecked parental authority. He further states: "I write not because I want to be a writer, but because my past life forces me to pick up the pen."[1]

Ba Jin in 1940

Family tells the tragic saga of the decadent and decaying extended Gao family, four generations living under one roof, headed by the patriarch Gao the Elder who rules with a ruthless iron hand. The family is made up of the four surviving sons of the patriarch, the third and fourth generation offspring, hordes of cousins, uncles, aunts, maids, cooks, servants, and hangers-on of diverse functions. This mass of humanity lives in the

Mingfeng & Juehui in Family

self-contained and confining world of the Manor House, which is adorned with bridges, lakes, gazebos, archways, and well-tended bushes and gardens. Yet not far under the seemingly tranquil surface is an ugly undercurrent of conflicts, intrigues, and immense misery which cannot be alleviated by the physical beauty and material opulence of the surroundings.

The tragic drama of the family is brought about both by the generation gap between the old and the young and ideological differences between the antiquated and the new; and women, especially the young ones, are most often the sacrificed victims in these conflicts. The story threads mainly through the thwarted lives of the third generation of young men and women, in a mood of sorrow and despair. On the one hand there is the typical Woman-as-Victim in the female cousin Mei, who is hopelessly in love with the oldest Gao brother Juexin but is married off to a man she detests simply because her mother and Juexin's mother had a falling out at the card table, while Juexin's marriage was decided by his grandfather by drawing lots. Thus the happiness of the star-crossed lovers was summarily disregarded because of parental whims. Mei eventually dies of psychologically induced melancholia and tuberculosis. (TB is a much used *Deus ex machina* of exit in literary works of the 1930s.)

Mingfeng the maid is another Woman-as-Victim who is a pawn of both hierarchical distinctions and traditional sexism. Mingfeng's despairing love for the third Gao brother Juehui is the only sustaining power in her otherwise pathetic existence. When she is about to be sent off to be the concubine of an aging scholar, her only recourse is to drown herself in the lake of the Manor House compound. Thus death serves as the liberator for the meek and hopeless. Death takes a third Woman-as-Victim in Juexin's wife Ruijue when superstition dictates that she must be moved far from the family

compound during childbirth because of the funeral preparations for Gao the Patriarch. Among the backdrops of hopeless and helpless women, be they mistresses or maids, is continuous wailing about the "poor lot of being a woman," in which worldly misery is attributed to "preordained fate." Thus to Mei, her misery is because "all my life fate has played tricks on me; I am not in control."[2] To Mingfeng the maid, it is her "poor fate" to be denied the happiness of her love: "All is preordained, nothing can change it."[3] Even for women whose lives are not cut short by death or suicide, living at the Manor House is still full of anguish and humiliation. Waner the maid has the misfortune to replace Mingfeng after Mingfeng commits suicide, to be old man Feng's concubine, a role she dreads but cannot reject.

On the other hand, there is a new breed of women who do not submit to this kind of misery and humiliation. How does this new breed of woman come about? It comes from the woman who is similarly constrained in the strait-jacket of social conformism, but who dares to fight for her freedom. The Gao family's young cousin Qin is a shining specimen of the New Woman: bright, courageous, hopeful, diligent, independent in spirit, and rational in understanding. This assertive young woman fights to have a coed public education, quotes and reads Ibsen and Tolstoy and progressive magazines with such telling titles as *The New Dawn Weekly, The New Youth, The New Tide*, believes that "the world is changing anew everyday, women and men are the same human beings,"[4] and proclaims that "It's up to me to decide [on going to a coed school], whether Ma approves or not is no matter, it's all up to me. Because I am just like you people [referring to her male cousins], I am also a human being."[5]

For a woman, to whom society only grants quasi-human status, to claim full status as a human being is a daring proposition. Thus in order to gain the dignity

and consciousness of the New Woman as a full-fledged human being, Qin has to wage valiant battles against obstacles of all kinds: age-old ignorance, superstitions, and prejudices from her elders, peers, and society at large. To her proclamation of independence, the second Gao brother Juemin, who eventually becomes her fiancé, gives the ultimate compliment: "you are a new woman!"[6]

The New Woman is not entirely without occasional fears and doubts. When her good friend Xu Jianru, the fiery revolutionary, admonishes her that together they should be the brave pioneers to blaze a new path for countless sisters who come after them, Qin admits to having doubts and fears about whether her unorthodox behavior would hurt her widowed mother's feelings or invoke the scorn of her relatives.[7] Yet when her mother mentions a proposal for an arranged marriage for her, Qin knows that she has reached the point of no return on the road to rebellion. She sees the link between her fate and that of the legions of women before her: "In her mind's eye there appeared a long long road on which lay the corpses of many young women. It stretched to unknown length. She knew that the road was paved a few thousand years ago. This land was soaked in the blood and tears of those dead women....their bodies were used to satisfy some bestial sexual desires." (p. 209–210) She is determined that she is not going to be one of these women whose bodies are scattered on that ancient road of sacrifice. She tells herself: "I want to be a human being, the same as a man. I will not go down that road. I will walk a new road, a new road."[8]

A new road means a total break with the past; it also means open revolt. Yet the New Woman cannot survive without the help and encouragement of liberated men, such as Juemin and Juehui. Especially Juehui, the youngest son of the first branch of the family, who is the most ardent revolutionary and who advocates

individual happiness and drastic social changes. It is Juehui who helps his brother Juemin escape an impending arranged marriage. It is Juehui who believes that "we are young, not disabled, not fools, we should fight for our own happiness."[9] It is also Juehui who is resolute in his break with the living death that the family stands for: "I'm going to walk my own path, even if I have to walk over their dead bodies. I'm going forward."[10] It is also Juehui the "prophet" who, through the intrigues, denounces the depraved life styles of his uncles and aunts and foresees the dissolution of the family. He asserts "I am the prophet, I come to predict your doom." He believes that "the era of Mei [the Woman-as-Victim] is going to be finished. It is to be replaced by a new age, the age of Qin [the Woman-as-Warrior], or the age of Xu Jianru." It is also his and Juemin's age. Their combined strength is not to be resisted by that weak, hypocritical and evil old family.[11]

At the end of the book, after the patriarch's death, Juehui is also the first Gao offspring to break away from the imprisonment of the family by leaving for the dynamic world of Shanghai. At 18 years of age, he is the first Gao youth to assert his total independence and freedom, thus giving hope to those who are left behind within the confining walls of the Manor House.

Spring

With the Patriarch's death at the end of the first part of the Trilogy, the family sinks into inevitable decline. The Patriarch's three surviving sons, especially the fourth and fifth of the original five brothers, indulge themselves in unrestrained dissipation. The men, prematurely aging in their thirties or early forties, squander their time and fortune in continuous rounds of feasts, drinking, women, opium smoking, and other debaucheries, while their wives immerse themselves in a routine of dinners, card games, gossip, squabbles, and

occasional fracases with their philandering husbands. The words of the disaffected domestic drudge Qiansau describe it all: "I don't steal, I don't cheat, why am I inferior to you? I'm not like you rich people. You play with transvestite actors, you sleep with your maids, you smoke opium, all these immoral things, which one don't you do? The Patriarch is dead less than a year, but the Manor House is filthy and stinks to high heaven inside no matter how good it looks on the outside."[12] It is under these "rotten to the core" circumstances that the conflicts between the third generation of young men and women and their uncles and aunts intensify. Some of the young have come to the realization that their only salvation lies in open rebellion.

The second volume of the Trilogy, *Spring*, finds the young women of the third generation living in the same tedium and despair that permeate *Family*. The ghost of the Patriarch lingers on in the marriage that he had arranged for his granddaughter Shuying while he was alive. The prospect of marrying the good-for-nothing second son of the Chen family fills Shuying with dread and despair. In order to combat this dark prospect, Shuying escapes into the fictional world of Western novels by living the vicarious lives of the heroines who have control over their own destinies. But of all the young women none is more pathetic than Shuzhen of the fifth branch of the family, whose ignorant and unfeeling mother had her feet bound to enhance her chances for a better match in marriage. This fourteen year old teenager drags herself around on a pair of deformed feet, like a disabled old woman, shy, timid, and feeling immensely inadequate and inferior among her female cousins.

Then there is the young woman Hui, a cousin of the Gao brothers, who was forced into a disastrous marriage by her father. In Hui's unhappy life, cut short by a broken heart and melancholia, we hear the echo of the dead

Mei. Both young women's happiness was disposed of by parental follies, both died of broken hearts, both were hopelessly in love with the oldest Gao brother Juexin, in whom they found a kindred spirit. Juexin is a male counterpart of Mei and Hui, meek, submissive, obedient, with a strong sense of duty and filial piety towards his elders, accepting whatever parental authority dictates without complaint, facing life's burdens with resignation and a certain sense of self-loathing. He is the antithesis of his younger brothers Juehui and Juemin. But even the meek may grow and gain a certain measure of courage when life teaches tragic lessons in rapid succession. So it is the same Juexin who, after losing three women he loves to the system under which they died, decides to help Shuying to escape her arranged marriage.

Spring centers around the concurrently running plots of Shuying's impending marriage, the young people's scheme to engineer her escape, and cousin Hui's unhappy marriage and subsequent early death. Thus Ba Jin stresses the unhappiness resulting from Shuying's marriage-to-be and Hui's marriage-as-is. Amid all this turmoil, a refrain of fatalism wails through the book like the chorus of a Greek tragedy. From Zhoushi, the Gao brothers' stepmother, on cousin Hui's unhappy marriage: "human affairs are preordained. A lot of them are unhappy. All are fated. You can't blame anybody. To be a woman is to have a bad fate. Most women have to suffer like this. You think it's only Hui who suffers? How about Mei? I only pray that I won't be a woman in my next life."[13] To Shuying's young cousin Shuhua, on learning about the misery the maid Waner has to endure as old Feng's concubine: "I hate it! I hate it! I hate it that I'm not a man! If I were a man I'd take care of old Feng!"[14] To Shuying: "I hate it that I'm not a man, otherwise I could help you!" And to Hui, who eventually succumbs to an early death: "A woman's fate is miser-

able!"[15]

Even with these lamentations, the women in *Spring* are a bit stronger than they were in *Family*. The New Woman in Qin is getting more earnest and assured by eagerly participating in activist meetings, serving as an editor of a progressive magazine, even bringing her young female cousins to an outing in the park, which enrages their uncles. All these activities entail no small measure of courage and commitment which Qin in *Family* did not seem to possess. Even her less accomplished cousins such as Shuhua and Shuying do not believe in a fatalistic interpretation of life the way their mothers do. They have started to question why a woman's lot has to be worse than a man's.[16] To question the validity of the status quo is a first sign of revolt. And the seed of revolt has been planted sometime ago when Juemin escaped an arranged marriage and Juehui escaped altogether to Shanghai. Even the maid Waner who has replaced Mingfeng to be old Feng's concubine is an awakened woman. In spite of all the mistreatment she receives in Feng's household, she does not intend to take the easy way out by taking her own life, but has resolved to outlive the sadistic Feng and his equally evil wife.[17]

These are women whose sense of self-worth has been aroused. The gradual birth of the New Woman in Shuying and Shuhua, and the maturing of the New Woman in Qin come about through a slow and painful process. The young women and men have been shocked by too many tragedies of their peers into a realization that "philosophy of non-resistance" only leads to sacrifice and death. With courage and solidarity they can better themselves and change their circumstances. When plotting Shuying's escape from home, Juemin writes to his brother Juehui: "In our family, you were the first 'radical,' I am the second, and now I am creating the third..."[18] The third "radical" is Shuying. Sym-

bolically, Shuying's escape is a collective conspiracy and revolt engineered by the young against the old, the innocent against the corrupt, and the good against the evil. With the right help and the right occasion, in every subjugated old-fashioned woman is a radical New Woman screaming to be born.

For Shuying, who once contemplated drowning herself in the lake like the maid Mingfeng if she could not free herself from the arranged marriage, escape to Shanghai is an ultimate affirmation of personal freedom and independence. From Shanghai she writes to Qin: "Spring belongs to us."[19]

Autumn

With that upbeat note, the saga continues in the fictional world of *Autumn*, the last volume of the Trilogy. This book sees the total disintegration of the Gao household as an extended family of "four generations under one roof," the highest ideal a Chinese family in the old society could strive for. After the Patriarch's death, the family loses its central unifying force and begins its downhill slide to gradual but certain decline and internal dissension. The Patriarch's third son Kemin, as the oldest of the three surviving sons, and, thus the titular head of the family, can not control the wayward ways of his two younger brothers, the heads of the fourth and fifth branches of the family. Frequent fights and quarrels among the younger members of the family and intrigues against each other among the old plague the household, while ideological clashes between generations become wider and increasingly irreconcilable.

In *Spring* we saw the birth of the New Woman, or in Juemin's words the "radicalization" of Shuying when she, with the help of her cousins, mustered enough courage to escape from home and an arranged marriage. In *Autumn* it is Shuhua's turn to join the ranks of rebels. Among the female members of the third generation,

Shuhua has always been rather brash, outspoken and headstrong; she doesn't care much about what others think of her. When discussing the mistreatment their little cousin Shuzhen gets from her mother, Shuhua asserts that "children are not the merchandise of parents to be dealt with any way their parents choose."[20] On marriage she has this to say: "I'm the one who decides my own affairs, nobody else."[21] But it is only through the help and encouragement of Qin and Juemin that she has decided to get a public education, thus exposing herself further to new ideas and Western ways. For a young woman of a respectable family to get an education, to use her third uncle Kemin's words "is not a good thing, a woman does not need much of an education, all she needs is an understanding of etiquette."[22] But the young women of the Gao household, in the final days of the family as a cohesive unit, have reached that proverbial point of no return in their ideological consciousness as awakened women who demand the full status of human beings. At the end of the book, Qin, Shuhua and Shuying and Xu Jianru before them, all have their braids cut off, and wear their hair short in the fashion of the new youth, symbolically, as a gesture of rebellion against social conformism and parental authority, which are used to govern every facet of a woman's life, down to dress and hair style.

In contrast to these young women who fight against all odds to claim their individual rights, there are the pitiful cases of Women-as-Victims in their cousins Hui and Shuzhen. Hui died of melancholia at the end of *Spring*, but throughout *Autumn*, her body lies unburied in a desolate nunnery because her husband, who under the old system has sole control over her body and soul, is too busy getting remarried to find her a suitable burial plot. The pain and humiliation her family goes through to get her husband to bury Hui six months after her death is one of the most heart-rending parts of

the book. The fact that a woman, even in death, is not free from the control of her master/husband stresses the indignity and enslavement that a woman is subject to under the old mores. Then there is the most distressing of all the young women of the third generation: Shuzhen. The only child of the fifth branch of the family, she is unloved by both parents, who had hoped in vain for a male heir. In despair as the scapegoat in her parents' constant fights, she commits suicide at fifteen by jumping into a well.

The maids fare even worse than the mistresses. Jianer dies because her mistress does not think that she is worth a doctor's care. When told of Jianer's death, her mistress is upset not because of the news, but because that she has been disturbed from her sleep. Jianer's poor lot prompts another woman servant to remark: "It's better that she died; if she was alive, she'd suffer more."[23] Death serves as liberator for woman in bondage.

Death claims the weak, but makes the survivors stronger and more defiant. "Do not go gentle into the good night, rage! rage!" So the survivors rage anew with each tragedy. It makes them realize more acutely that it is the "dying and rotten" (Juemin's words) social system that protects the corrupt from the innocent, the predator from the prey. This realization makes Juemin, Qin, and all their young comrades more resolute in their commitment to the movement to dethrone and uproot the old archaic social structure, of which the family is both a symbiotic and microcosmic entity.

The book ends with a symbolic fire of the commercial building in which the family's business office is housed and the sale of the Manor House property, thus splitting the family formally and irrevocably: thereby the dissolution of the kingdom and castle that Gao the Elder built a half century earlier is complete and total.

Conclusion

In his various prefaces and epilogues to the Trilogy, Ba Jin makes it clear that the work is autobiographical in nature and emotionally close to his heart. It is written both as a loving memorial to those who died struggling against the monstrosities of the old family system and an angry outcry on behalf of those who managed to escape from its imprisonment and survive in new found freedom and self-worth. Ba Jin says in the Prologue to the 1931 edition of *Family* that he intends to criticize his elder brother's (who is the model for Juexin) "kowtowism" and "non-resistance philosophy," which not only caused his own downfall but the tragic endings of his wife and several of his beloved female cousins. The book makes it abundantly clear that it is only through courage and self-assertion that young people, both men and women, can slowly and painfully come to grips with their own destinies. In the gradual process of self-discovery and personal growth, through education and contacts with new ideas from the outside world, they bid farewell not only to the old world in which they suffer, but to their own old selves and identities. In this sense, the Trilogy is both mourning a by-gone era and celebrating a new dawn. Against the backdrop of a changing China in the turbulent 1930s, the sorrowful saga of the Gao family speaks touchingly that in the continuous cycles of life, there is the seed of renewal in disintegration, of rebirth in decay, of hope in despair. The gradual awakening of the New Woman and self-confidence in Qin, Shuhua, Shuying and Yun and even in the maid Waner harbingers the advent of a new world, resting fragilely on both the good faith and trepidation of those legions who had endured patiently but gallantly.

Notes

1. *Recent Works of Ba Jin*, Chengdu, 1978, p. 47. C. T. Hsia is quite critical of Ba Jin as a writer, saying: "Pa Chin is one of the most popular and voluminous writers of this period, but he is not one of the most important. Despite the high critical and popular esteem he has enjoyed, one fails to find in his work of this period (he gradually improved as an artist during the war years) the striving for excellence that has distinguished such diverse writers as Mao Tun, Shen Ts'ung-wen, and Chang T'ien-i." *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction: 1917–1957*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, p. 237. There is a Chinese translation of this book by C. T. Hsia, translated and edited by Joseph S. M. Lau and others, *Zhongguo Xiandai Xiaoshuo Shi*, Taibei: Biographical Literature Publishing Co., 1979.
2. For a brief introduction to Ba Jin (in Wade-Giles romanization Pa Chin) and English translations of his works, see *Family* in the Eastern Civilization Readings series, Vol. III, pp. 47–48. It also includes Sidney Shapiro's English translation of *Family* (published by the Peking Foreign Languages Press), Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Book Co., 1969, pp. 49–300. Olga Lang's *Pa Chin and His Writings*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1967, remains the only book-length study of Ba Jin in English.
3. *Jia* (Family), Hong Kong: Jinming Publications, 1979, pp.120, 211.
4. Op cit., p. 25.
5. Op. cit., p. 41.
6. Ibid.
7. Op. cit., pp. 204–205.
8. Op. cit., p. 210.
9. Op. cit., p. 85.
10. Op. cit., p. 324.
11. Op. cit., p. 299. Concerning Ba Jin's own description of women characters in the *Family*, see the article he wrote in October 1956, translated by W. J. F. Jenner, "My *J'accuse* Against This Moribund System: Notes on a Crumbling Landlord Clan of Western Sichuan," in *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-Portrayals*, edited by Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley, New York and London: M. E. Sharpe, 1992, pp. 278–283. During the Cultural Revolution from 1968 to 1976, Ba Jin had to undergo thought reform and many hardships, like so many other intellectuals. His beloved wife suffered from

cancer and died without medication or hospital care. His Torrents Trilogy was condemned as a "poisonous weed." Only after 1977 was he gradually rehabilitated. In December 1980 he wrote an article, entitled "Concerning the Torrents Trilogy (*Guanyu Jiliu*), which was published in the quarterly *Historical Materials on New Literature* (*Xinwenxue Shiliao*) No. 2, 1981. In this article, Ba Jin recalled how he wrote the Torrents Trilogy. "During the ten-year period from 1931 to 1940, I completed the writing of the Trilogy. When I was writing, I often became emotional. Sometimes, I put down my pen, and walked back and forth in my room. Sometimes, I read aloud to myself the sentences and phrases that I had just finished writing. Sometimes, I sighed, moaned, and shed tears. And sometimes, I was angry and in an agony." (p. 23) "I had tremendous hatred for feudalism. These three novels by me all were intended to expose and to accuse the sins of feudalism. When I was writing them, I felt that I was shooting the enemy standing in front of me. I saw with my eyes the bullets flying out, and I seemed to hear the enemy's moaning." (p. 26) However, to Ba Jin's regret, his enemy, "feudalism," has survived. In a series of interviews with two scholars, conducted in 1979 and 1987, Ba Jin was reported to have said: "At the present, there are still people like the Old Master Gao; there are all kinds of Old Master Gaos, who are active and all come from the roots of feudalism. In order to realize the Four Modernizations, we must oppose feudalism. *Family* was anti-feudal. I was a writer of the May 4th period. The May 4th Movement was anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. The content of *Family* is anti-feudalism." See "Gist of Interviews with Ba Jin" (*Ba Jin Fangwen Huicui*), by Tang Jinhai and Zhang Xiaoyun, in *Historical Materials on the New Literature*, No. 3, 1988, p. 9. From the above, it is clear that Ba Jin is not happy with contemporary Chinese society. He is well-known for his outspoken criticisms and comments on the establishment and therefore is not in political favor. As a grand man of letters, he has prestige but little influence. In the PRC today, the three leading writers of Modern China are generally considered in this order: Lu Xun, Guo Mojo, Mao Dun.

12. *Spring* (*Chun*), Beijing: Renmin Publications, 1980, p. 191.
13. Op. cit., p. 85.
14. Op. cit., p. 113.
15. Op. cit., p. 298.
16. Op. cit., p. 85.

17. Op. cit., p. 115.
18. Op. cit., p. 535.
19. Op. cit., p. 535.
20. *Autumn* (*Qiu*) Beijing: Renmin Publications, 1980, p. 346.
21. Op. cit., p. 13.
22. Op. cit., p. 613.
23. Op. cit., p. 496. According to C. T. Hsia, *Autumn* is much better than *Family* and *Spring*. "*Autumn* should be ranked among the major novels in modern Chinese literature. It demonstrates that in spite of a flat style and a psychology that ignores the subtler aspects of character, something powerful could still be achieved by staying true to one's feelings. In *Family* and *Spring*, Pa Chin's powerful feelings are at the service of a theory which stultifies them; the triumph of *Autumn* is finally the assertion of the emotional integrity of the novelist over the didacticism of the shallow philosopher and revolutionary." See *A History of Modern Chinese Fiction*, pp. 254–255. Nevertheless, *Family* seems to have enjoyed greater popularity abroad than its two sequels, *Spring* and *Autumn*. In addition to Shapiro's English translation, a French translation of *Family* appeared in 1979. Subsequently, from the French translation, four more translations were made, namely, Serbo-croatian, Dutch, Spanish, and Portuguese. See "The French Translation of *Family*" by Li Ping, in *Historical Materials on the New Literature*, No. 1, 1982, p. 225.

Chapter 6

Desire and Desperation: An Analysis of the Female Characters in Cao Yu's Play *The Thunderstorm*

Wan Ning

Introduction

During his last year of study at the English Department of Qinghua University, Cao Yu wrote his first work *The Thunderstorm*. The play was published in 1934 and first performed in 1935 in Tokyo by Chinese scholars and students. It was the first play of that time to achieve both critical and commercial success on the Chinese stage.

The publication of *The Thunderstorm* ushered in a new era in Chinese drama: "spoken drama," as distinct from Chinese traditional drama, which is performed with songs, dances, and orchestras. Although spoken drama did exist before *The Thunderstorm*, it was rudimentary, with only male actors, and it was usually adaptations from Western dramas or novels.[1] This significant play was the first to portray on the stage real life in China. As the famous author and critic Chen Huangmei notes, "Majestic style and skilled technique appear for the first time on the Chinese stage in *The Thunderstorm*."[2] Although Cao Yu's first work, it is one of his best and still ranks as one of the finest Chinese realistic dramas, a tradition founded by Cao Yu himself.[3]

His expertise in creating sympathetic female characters is one of Cao Yu's major accomplishments. He says, "I have created very few female villains. My sympathy is on the female side. My heroines are all more or less

worthy of sympathy."[4] The three female characters in *The Thunderstorm* embody the author's perception of womanhood: the beautiful appearance and pure soul of Sifeng, a girl full of the hope of life; the tenderness and forgiveness of Shiping, a traditional image of woman, inwardly strong, and fatalistic; and the fiery passion of Fanyi, a typical new Chinese woman influenced by the May 4th Movement. The play *The Thunderstorm* shows how the three female characters have reacted to their lives and their fates in the social conditions existing in China in the early nineteen twenties.

The Play

Lightning. Thunder. Storm. Since ancient times people have interpreted natural phenomena as the expression of the will of Heaven, often as a sign of Heaven's displeasure. Many authors have used the image of a thunderstorm to describe dramatic events and to sharpen conflicts in their characters' lives.[5] Cao Yu falls within this tradition in his famous drama *The Thunderstorm*.

On a dark night, when the rumble of distant thunder is heard, Shiping is tormented by anxiety over her daughter Sifeng's fate. She questions Sifeng, trying to find out the facts about her relationship with the young masters of the Zhou family. Shiping asks her daughter to fall on her knees and swear that she will never see any of the Zhous again. At that moment, a peal of thunder rolls across the sky.

> **Shiping**: Hear the thunder? Now, what if you should forget what I've told you and see any of the Zhous again?
>
> **Sifeng** *(apprehensively)*: But I won't, Mother, I won't.
>
> **Shiping**: No, my child, you must swear that you

won't. If you should ever forget what I've told you — *(A peal of thunder.)*

Sifeng *(in desperation)*: Then may I be struck dead by lightning. *(Flinging herself into her mother's arms.)* Oh, Mother, Mother! *(She bursts into tears.) (Crashes of thunder.)*

In his play, the playwright uses the image of the thunderstorm not only to heighten the atmosphere and to underline the rhythm of the action but also to reflect the passions, conflicts, and anguish of the female characters.

The Thunderstorm concerns a family's tragic story, in which the author explores the problems of women, sex, and family in Chinese society at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among the eight characters in the cast, three are female. These female characters bind together all the explicit and implicit conflicts in the play, the action of which is concentrated in a mere twenty-four hours, thus observing one of the three unities defined by Aristotle. Conflicts occur not only among the characters, but also within individual characters. In the sharp conflicts and complicated plot, the female characters stand out by virtue of their internal strength.[6]

Summary of the Plot

Thirty years earlier Zhou Puyuan, the young master of a rich family, had a love affair with his maid, Shiping, who bore him two sons. Because of traditional Chinese prejudice about family status, Zhou Puyuan could not marry Shiping. To save the honor of the Zhous and Zhou Puyuan's career, the Zhous drove Shiping away with her new-born sick son, Dahai, on the eve of Zhou Puyuan's marriage to a girl from a rich family; but they kept Shiping's first son, Ping.

Driven away, Shiping tried to commit suicide by jumping into the river, but she was rescued. After that she married and gave birth to a daughter Sifeng, by Lu Gui, a servant from the lower class. Unknown to Shiping, both Lu Gui and their daughter Sifeng now work as servants at the Zhous' house.

After his first wife died, Zhou Puyuan married the well-educated Fanyi for her money and position, not for love. Fanyi, much younger than Zhou and just a little older than Ping, bore Zhou Puyuan a son, Chong. A love affair has taken place between stepmother and stepson. However, Ping regrets it and wants to stop the "revolting" relationship. At the same time, Ping becomes involved in a love-affair with Sifeng, the Zhous' young maid. (They do not know that they are half-brother and half-sister.)

Out of jealousy, Fanyi asks Sifeng's mother (who is called Lu Ma now) to come and take Sifeng away. When Lu Ma (Shiping) comes to see Fanyi, she recognizes Zhou Puyuan's house and unexpectedly meets him in the living room. Zhou Puyuan recognizes Shiping and wants to give her money, but Shiping refuses and decides to take Sifeng away immediately, in order to save her from a fate like her own, especially because she knows the blood relationship between Ping and Sifeng.

But it is too late. Ping and Sifeng are deeply in love

and Sifeng is pregnant. When Shiping discovers this, the blow is like a thunderbolt. Thinking that the incest between her children is her punishment for her youthful sins, Shiping decides to hide this information and to let Ping and Sifeng go far away to find whatever happiness they can.

Meanwhile, after driving Sifeng away, Fanyi asks Ping to stay at home with her; but he refuses. Ping's decision to leave with Sifeng drives Fanyi mad. Fanyi's love for Ping turns into hate; she tries to ruin the love between Ping and Sifeng, and she asks Zhou Puyuan to intervene. Contrary to her expectations, Zhou Puyuan announces in front of the Zhou family and Lu Gui's family that Lu Ma is Shiping, Ping's blood mother. This is a bolt from the blue that leads to Ping's and Sifeng's suicide and to Chong's death. Shiping is dumbfounded, Fanyi becomes mad and the Zhou family is destroyed.

Shiping — a good woman who believes in fate but tries to break from it

When Shiping appears on the stage, we see that "her complexion is fair and clear, which makes her look eight or nine years younger.... Her clothes are plain but neat, and she wears them like a woman of good family who has fallen on evil days.... Whenever she speaks, the faintest of smiles comes to her lips. Her voice is low and steady.... Her teeth are good and evenly set, and when she smiles deep dimples appear at the corners of her mouth." One can see that this is a good woman, who should have had an honorable life, albeit a poor one. But she has had an unjust fate.

About thirty years earlier, as a good-looking, sensitive, and innocent maid, Shiping was attracted to her young master, Zhou Puyuan. After she had borne him two sons, Ping and Dahai, she was driven away from the Zhous' house because of her low family status. After an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide, Shiping

finds life very difficult: an unmarried young woman with a child is discriminated against in traditional Chinese society. Even Lu Gui, a servant of low status himself, feels wronged by marrying her and frequently abuses her because of it. However, Shiping is a woman with self-respect and self-control.

Shiping works very hard. As a housekeeper at a girls' school far away from her family, she earns very little and is able to come home only once every two years. Her honesty earns her trust from others. Once, her headmaster lost an important purse, and Shiping found it and returned it. The headmaster's wife then insisted on giving Shiping a present. She brought out many trinkets and told her to choose one for her daughter. Shiping chose a thimble, the symbol of hardworking and thrifty womanhood.

Shiping's low position and poverty do not mean that her character is low; on the contrary, it only gives her more self-esteem. We can see this from the following dialogue when Shiping arrives at the Zhou home to see Fanyi:

> **Lu**: Get your mother a bottle of mineral water, Sifeng. *(to his wife.)* In a big house like this they have everything! Now that it's summer, there's lemonade, fruit juice, watermelon, oranges, bananas, fresh litchis — have what you like.
>
> **Shiping**: No, don't. Sifeng. Don't listen to your father. We've no right to help ourselves to other people's things....

Again, when her "unjust fate" brings her back to Zhou and Zhou asks how much money she wants, she replies:

> ...you still think I came here purposely to blackmail you, do you?...You think I'd blackmail you with our relationship? Don't worry, I won't.

Then, tearing up the five-thousand-dollar check Zhou has given her, Shiping says:

No amount of your money can cancel out all
these years of heartbreak.

In addition, Shiping shows self-control. When she first meets Zhou, who has abandoned her and caused her a life of suffering, she calmly speaks about herself as if saying something about someone else:

...she wasn't a lady, and not particularly clever —
and not very well behaved either, by all accounts.

Her words make Zhou wince.

Although Shiping is an old-fashioned woman with feelings of self-hatred and shame in her heart, she does not want to submit to her "fate" without protest. When she concludes that her own life is hopeless, she places her hope for happiness in her son Dahai and her daughter Sifeng. Her children become her spiritual sustenance. Shiping's main concern is to protect her daughter's virginity and happiness by helping her to avoid the same disastrous course she herself followed. Leaving Sifeng at home with her father, Lu Gui, Shiping forbids her to accept service as a maid in the house of a rich family. However, with the connivance of her father, Sifeng does accept such service and goes to work at the Zhou house. When Shiping discovers where her daughter is working, she decides to take her away immediately. She forces her to swear, against the background of thunder and lightning, never to see the Zhous again. But it is too late. With her hope for her daughter's happiness dashed, Shiping's only spiritual support crumbles. However, she still tries to struggle for her children's happiness by letting them go far away where no one will know them. As for her, she is willing to bear the punishment of Heaven by herself. A good mother, with deep love for her children, she laments:

Oh, God knows what this is a punishment for —
what have I ever done to bring such a calamity
down on our heads?

> My poor children, they didn't know what they were doing. Oh, God, if anyone has to be punished, why can't it just be me? It's my fault and no one else's; it all began when I took the first false step. *(Heart-broken.)* They're my innocent children; they deserve a chance in life. The guilt is here in my heart, and I should be the one to suffer for it. *(She rises to her feet and looks heavenward.)* And tonight, here I am letting them go away together. I know I'm doing wrong, but this way the responsibility will all be mine; all this trouble was caused by me in the first place. My children haven't done anything wrong; they're too good and innocent to do anything wrong. If there must be a punishment, let me bear it — alone.

This passage summarizes Shiping's view of her own bitter life, victimized by the prejudices and stifling conventions of old Chinese society, as well as by her own sense of responsibility for her innocent children's fate.

In recent years, criticism of the character Shiping has taken the same point of view, namely that Shiping had been victimized by Zhou Puyuan when she was a young maid at the Zhous'. She is analyzed as a representative of the working-class victim, as an uncompromising antithesis of Zhou Puyuan.[7] However, neglecting the love between Shiping and Zhou Puyuan leaves one with an incomplete understanding of her character. In Shiping, the playwright sees the embodiment of an ideal: a beautiful woman who is, at the same time, kind-hearted, tender, and faithful. Their true love is shown clearly when they meet each other again after more than twenty years. Shiping's faithfulness to her first love is one of the positive characteristics of Chinese women. The recognition scene between Shiping and Zhou Puyuan in Zhou's living room shows that both have retained warm feelings for each other. When Zhou asks about his silk shirts, Shiping, with deep emotion, mentions to him that there should be five of those silk shirts

and that one of them has a hole burnt in the right sleeve, mended by having a plum blossom (signifying her family name) embroidered over the hole, and that the name Ping was embroidered beside it. After more than twenty years, Shiping still remembers how many silk shirts Zhou had and even the details of each one. This touching scene reveals that Shiping's bitterness and regret cannot conceal her true love for Zhou, which has lasted through her whole life. Like the hole in the sleeve, their love remains fresh in her memory.

Shiping's love for Zhou is not unrequited. Zhou Puyuan has also kept alive his love for Shiping over the past twenty-seven years. His memory of Shiping is deeply touching: her picture is kept on the table in the living room; each year he celebrates Shiping's birthday; Shiping's favorite furniture has been kept and is arranged according to her taste; the living room windows are shut even in suffocating summer heat in remembrance of Shiping's delicate health after the birth of their first son, Ping. In fact, Zhou Puyuan tells everyone that this picture is of his "lawful" wife. From these details we can see that Shiping was not merely a maid seduced by Zhou. On the contrary, Shiping enjoyed privileges in the Zhou family, living openly with the master and having the right to use the living room as she pleased. When Zhou tells her his memories of her, Shiping listens to him "with bent head...with a sigh," signifying that she accepts and understands his words of love.

In view of such considerations, one is tempted to reverse the traditional verdict upon Zhou Puyuan. Most critics consider him to be a person who is autocratic to his wife, arrogant to his sons, cruel to the workers in his mine, and tyrannical to his house-servants. His tender feelings toward Shiping, according to this analysis, are false.[8] In short, Zhou Puyuan is portrayed solely as a villain. Although as a representative of traditional Chi-

nese society Zhou is the chief criminal in this family tragedy, the playwright does not forget that he is, at the same time, a human being. Accordingly, Cao Yu humanizes Zhou by endowing him with fond memories of Shiping and pangs of conscience for abandoning her. Zhou says:

> I'm not as cold-blooded as you think. You don't imagine anyone can stifle his conscience as easily as that?

The fact that Shiping and Zhou still love one another explains why Shiping has no thoughts of revenge, either for her son Dahai or for herself. On the contrary, seeing a gun in Dahai's hand and knowing that he is capable of using it to take revenge on the Zhous, she strictly forbids him to do so:

> *(raising her voice)*:
>
> Now, listen to me, Dahai. You're my favorite child, and I've never talked to you like this before; but let me tell you this:
>
> If you hurt any of the Zhous — I don't care whether it's the master or the young gentlemen — if you so much as lay a hand on any of them, I'll have nothing more to do with you so long as I live.

Then, to emphasize her opposition to Dahai's idea of revenge, Shiping categorically states:

> You ought to know what I'm like by now. If you go and do the one thing I just couldn't bear you to do, I'll kill myself before your eyes. Give me that gun.

From scenes such as this, one can see that Shiping retains her love for Zhou, or, more precisely, she wants to keep her first love pure, untainted by the blood of revenge. In this light, it is understandable that Shiping blames her own fate and regrets her own "behavior," but never condemns Zhou. She chooses to bear the punishment on her own; she does not want to transfer the guilt

or the punishment to Zhou, although he carries at least as much responsibility as she for the events of the past.

Sifeng — the embodiment of young, pure girlhood, full of the hope of life, but destroyed by fate

In Zhou's suffocating house, Sifeng is a symbol of vitality. When you see her, you feel immediately that a bright light has appeared before your eyes. She is charming, lovely, healthy, full of vigor and vitality. As a servant of a rich family, Sifeng knows her place, but her beauty and youth shine through. She is aware of her good looks and her frequent smile enhances them.

A famous Chinese author, Lu Xun, says that tragedy is showing how the valuable things of life are destroyed.[9] During the action of this play, we witness the destruction of the valuable things of life (symbolized by Sifeng) — beauty, youth, morality.

The first person who makes Sifeng suffer is her father. Lu Gui knows that "there isn't a single decent Zhou in their whole family," yet he does nothing to protect his daughter from becoming involved with the Zhous. Quite the contrary: knowing the real relationship between Sifeng and the young master, Ping, Lu Gui still tells her of the shameful secret between Ping and Ping's stepmother, Fanyi, simply to extort money from her. Learning of this relationship makes her confused and afraid. She fears her father because she realizes that he knows her secret, and she despises him for his low morality: he drinks, gambles, and chases women. As a daughter, however, she feels obligated to listen to him, to give him money, and even to help him pay his gambling debts.

At the Zhous, Sifeng lives in constant fear of the master of the house, Zhou Puyuan. She has seen him force his wife to drink a very bitter and completely unnecessary medicine. Knowing the secret of Fanyi, Sifeng is also afraid of seeing her. She is aware that she is but a

child and no match for the older, more experienced woman.

In addition to her own fear and suffering, Sifeng is mostly worried about her mother. She knows how her mother loves her, and she doesn't want to hurt her mother. Notified by her father that her mother will soon be arriving at the Zhous, Sifeng says:

> Oh, Dad! Whatever happens, Mother mustn't find out what I've been up to here.... I just couldn't bear her to find out what I've been doing here. (*Flinging herself down on the table.*) Oh, Mother! Mother!

But how can she wrap fire in paper? How can she hide her secret from her mother? As she says to Ping:

> My mother really loves me. She was always against me going into service, and I'm afraid she might find out about us and — and that you may not be serious about me at all. If that happened it — it would break her heart.

Here we can see that when Sifeng understands the difficulty of her relationship with Ping and the dangerous possibility of being abandoned by him, she is first concerned about her mother's feelings, not about her own. When her mother asks her to swear never to see the Zhous again, she does not want to make this promise. But she finally does, because she loves her mother so much and does not want to break her mother's heart.

> **Shiping** *(with tears streaming down her cheeks)*: Do you want to break your mother's heart? You forget that for your sake — all my life I've — *(She turns her head aside and sobs.)*
>
> **Sifeng**: All right, Mother. I'll swear.

As the Chinese say, poetry is the highest form of literature. But love is even more beautiful than poetry. And Sifeng's love is selfless. The shameful secret between Ping and the mistress Fanyi is undoubtedly a

blow to Sifeng. But when Ping asks her if she has heard anything about him, she says she hasn't. She loves Ping and does not want to hurt him, telling him earnestly:

> I trust you. I trust you to be true to me, always. That's all I want.

Asking Ping to take her away with him, to leave the family situation in which she is terribly afraid, she says tenderly:

> I'll do everything I can to make you comfortable.... I promise I won't be any trouble to you. If people started gossiping about you because of me, I'd go away at once. You need not be afraid of scandal.

Being faithful to Ping and seeking her own happiness, Sifeng overrides her mother's objections and announces firmly:

> My mind's made up. Whoever he is, I belong to him now. My heart was promised to him from the very first, and there can never be anybody else for me but him....[W]herever he goes, I'll go with him and whatever he does, I'll do too....

This extraordinarily strong statement from an innocent young girl amounts to Sifeng's first and final appeal for her right to life and happiness. She scorns the value of family prestige and her mother's attempt to subject her to her will. When she first agrees to promise never to see the Zhous again, she wants to commit suicide; but when she sees the light in the window of Ping's room it becomes an image of the hope for life in her heart and encourages her to see Ping again.

Sifeng has more courage than her mother to fight for her own happiness. She cannot fight against the greater tragedy that ends her life, however. Learning that her relationship with Ping has been incestuous, she commits suicide by running into a live electric wire that has fallen in the Zhous' garden during the heavy rain after

the thunderstorm. Thus, Sifeng, a beautiful human being, is destroyed by a cruel universe.

Fanyi — a passionate woman, typical of new Chinese womanhood

In the traditional Chinese patriarchal society, marriage made the wife the life property of the husband. She had to stay at home with little freedom to associate with people outside of the family. The playwright Cao Yu chose Fanyi to exemplify the new Chinese woman, influenced by the May 4th Movement. With sympathy and understanding, Cao Yu describes her as a well-educated woman, sensitive yet strong, knowledgeable in literature, a poet, and a painter. She is open to new ideas, looking for freedom, love, happiness, and independence.

Eighteen years earlier Fanyi was "tricked" by the Zhous into marrying Zhou Puyuan, a man twenty years her senior, who behaved according to the old rules. In his house, he is the sole authority. Fanyi is expected to do what she is told and to be an exemplary obedient wife. For example, she is forced to believe that she is sick, to rest upstairs all day, and to drink an unnecessary and bitter medicine. She says:

> It's not in my nature to do just as I'm told by anybody.

but she has to.

On the other hand, Fanyi continues to hold her own thoughts and point of view, not caring how others view her actions. In response to Ping's calling their relationship "revolting," she says:

> I don't look at it like that. My conscience isn't made that way.

This indifference to public opinion is clearly brought out in an exchange between her and her son Chong about Sifeng:

> **Fanyi**: You're reckoning without your father. He may not approve.

Chong: This is my own affair.

Fanyi: And if people talk when they hear about it?

Chong: That would worry me even less.

Fanyi: Like mother, like son.

As a result of the repressed, stifling circumstances in which Fanyi lives, she becomes estranged and hostile. The development of her character is portrayed through her conflicts with Zhou, her husband, and with Ping, her stepson.

Fanyi starts to revolt against her husband's autocracy, seeing that he is "the biggest hypocrite of the lot." In the scene where Zhou asks her to see a doctor, she replies that she is not sick, and that even if she were, her illness could not be treated by a doctor. To Zhou's surprise, she starts to leave the room without his permission.

Zhou *(at the top of his voice)*: Stop! Where do you think you're going?

Fanyi *(nonchalantly)*: I'm going upstairs.

Zhou *(imperiously)*: Do as you're told!

Fanyi: Take orders from you? *(She looks him disdainfully up and down.)* And who, pray, do you think you are? *(Without more ado she goes out through the dining room.)*

The most significant symbol of her revolt against her husband is her incest with her stepson Ping. Fanyi shows fearlessness and strength in daring to break the bonds of tradition to fight for her happiness, however small, even to the point of forsaking the duty of motherhood and placing her life and reputation in Ping's hands.

In the increasing conflict between Fanyi and Ping, we

can see the development of her character. Ping starts to detest the "revolting" relationship with his step-mother, who is also his lover, and becomes involved in a love affair with Sifeng, in spite of the fact that she is a maid. Although their love is anything but ideal, Fanyi does not want to lose her grasp on Ping, believing that without his love her life will "wither away and slowly die of thirst." Ping's love for her is the only support in her life, the only air in the suffocating house. Moreover, Fanyi is jealous of Sifeng. Thus, the conflict between Fanyi and Ping becomes increasingly sharp, with Ping steadily retreating, while Fanyi determinedly closes in on him.

Fanyi dreams of having Ping stay at home with her after she has fired Sifeng, but Ping refuses and admits that he loves Sifeng. Enraged, Fanyi warns him:

> Remember, no woman can be expected to submit to humiliation at the hands of two generations.

Then she hints that she will take measures:

> Take care. Take care. Don't drive a disappointed woman too hard. She's capable of anything.

Fanyi's actions, which are propelled not by her mind but by her feelings, confirm her words. Knowing that Ping will go to the Lus to see Sifeng at midnight, Fanyi cannot control her jealousy and follows him. When Ping and Sifeng embrace in Sifeng's room, Fanyi maliciously closes the window from the outside so that Ping is trapped inside. This is her first revenge.

Even at this stage Fanyi is unwilling to give up Ping. Still clinging to hope, she makes one final effort, pleading with Ping to take her away with him, even agreeing to allow Sifeng to live with them. Again categorically rejected by Ping, Fanyi falls into a state of semi-madness, her only aim now being to destroy the love between Ping and Sifeng. She even turns to her own son Chong for help (she knows that Chong loves Sifeng, too).

But to her surprise, Chong agrees that Sifeng should

leave with Ping. All her hopes are now dashed. She exclaims to her son:

> Ugh, you! (*With a sudden fury.*) You're no son of mine! (*Incoherently.*) You're no man at all. If I were you — (*turning on Sifeng.*) I'd smash her, burn her, kill her! You're just a poor, feeble idiot — not a spark of life in you! I should have known better — you're none of mine — no son of mine!

Not stopping here, Fanyi announces the shameful secret between Ping and herself and turns for help to the husband she despises. By this time the only thing on her mind is revenge. This is a woman for whom love and hate are extreme, in whose nature strong love mingles with cruel hatred. Her final action unexpectedly exposes the incest between Ping and Sifeng and culminates in her own son's death as a consequence of his effort to save Sifeng, who has electrocuted herself.

Fanyi then lapses completely into insanity. Thus, her indignation at and contempt for the Zhous finally erupt like a volcano and destroy the entire Zhou family and her along with it.

In Shiping and Fanyi, the playwright has created two sharply contrasting female characters. Both Shiping and Fanyi have loved and been loved, yet they have completely different attitudes toward love and toward their lives. Outwardly obedient to her fate, willing to bear any punishment on her own, harboring no hatred or desire for revenge against Zhou Puyuan, Shiping inwardly expresses the essence of her morality — her self-blame and forgiveness of others, her self-respect, her self-control. Her love for Zhou Puyuan has remained constant and pure.

By contrast, Fanyi's strong love for Ping turns quickly to spite, as she tries to destroy the love between him and Sifeng. Fanyi's short life has been filled with passion. When her deep love is not returned, it turns to hate, and her fury, like a thunderstorm, destroys the

Zhous and herself.

Shiping and Fanyi portray two models of typical Chinese womanhood of the twenties. Shiping conforms to the traditional image of woman — tender, inwardly strong, and fatalistic. Unlike Euripides' Medea, who kills her children out of revenge, Shiping places her hopes in her children. On the other hand, Fanyi represents the emerging new woman — passionate, bold, and vigorous — but still bound by some tradition: she cannot leave her husband as Ibsen's Nora does.

Conclusion

The tragedies of the three female characters Shiping, Sifeng, and Fanyi all stem ultimately from unfulfilled and unfulfillable desires. Indeed, the tragedy of Cao Yu's women results not only from social causes, but also from their own characters. As Oscar Wilde says, "Misfortunes one can endure — they come from outside, they are accidents. But to suffer for one's own faults — ah! — there is the sting of life." There is no way out for Shiping, Sifeng, or Fanyi. Their tragic ends are inevitable because of their character flaws and therefore elicit pity and fear from the spectators, as Aristotle demanded of tragedy.

According to Aristotle, tragedy is that which causes pity and fear in the spectator: pity because the character undergoes much suffering; fear because the character is similar to us. And the tragedy of the female characters in *The Thunderstorm* causes just such reactions. Cao Yu's heroines are not only victims of fate, but also women who try to fight against their fates. However, their tragedy lies in their inability to control fate. The main conflicts are the conflicts between their wills and their fates.

Shiping tries to protect her children. Sifeng decides to go after her own happiness. Fanyi tries to avenge her rejection. But all three are fooled by fate. No matter how

strong the characters are, they cannot control their fates.

Cao Yu, in his introduction to *The Thunderstorm*, says: "There exists an operational force in the universe, which the Hebrews called God, the Greeks called Fate, and modern men term natural law." He considers the action in *The Thunderstorm* not cause and effect, not retribution, but an irrational cruelty in the universe.

The title of the play not only refers to a natural phenomenon, but also acts as a symbol of the "operational force" that controls human beings. So, according to Cao Yu, there is an invisible ninth character in the play, the unknown force controlling human fate.

Notes

All quotes are taken from the English edition of *The Thunderstorm*, translated by Wang Tso-liang and A. C. Barnes, published by Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1958.

1. Such as some acts of *La Dame aux Camelias* by Dumas, fils; *A Negro Slave Supplicating Heaven for Succor*, based on Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin;* Ibsen's *A Doll's House; The Will to Live*, based on I. Turgenev's *Fathers and Children*.
2. Chen Huangmei, "I Am Still at a Loss," *Dagongbao*, Jan. 1, 1937.
3. For an introduction to "spoken drama," see Colin Mackerras, *Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey*, Beijing: New York Press, 1990, pp. 104–113.
4. Cao Yu, *Chinese Literature*, Peking, November, 1980. In the 1930s and 1940s, readers and audiences of *The Thunderstorm* in general were more responsive to the "social problems" suggested in the play. After 1949, Chinese critics, led by Zhou Yang, followed the Party interpretation that the play was an "antifeudal masterpiece." In 1982, the play was restaged in Tianjin, with Ding Xiaoping as the Director. Ding offered another interpretation by highlighting "the ninth role" of the play, that is, the thunderstorm, which is a symbol of nature's brutality and cruelty. See Kong Qingdong, "Cong *Leiyu* de Yanchushi Kan *Leiyu*" (A Review of *Thunderstorm* From the History of Its Staging), first published in *Wenxue Pingyi*, No. 1, 1991; an abridged version can be seen

in *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Yanjiu Congkang*, 1991, No. 3, Beijing, pp. 301–302.

5. For example, in Russian literature, N. Karamzin in *Poor Liza*; A. Ostrovskii in *The Thunderstorm*; I. Turgenev in *Virgin Soil*.
6. For a critical analysis of Cao Yu (b. 1910) and his plays, see Joseph S. M. Lau, *Ts'ao Yü: The Reluctant Disciple of Chekhov and O'Neill*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970. Cao Yu, in Wade-Giles romanization, is Ts'ao Yü. Lau's criticisms of Cao Yu's works have provoked controversy; see Yi Yang, "Cong Liu Shaomin Boshi Lun Cao Yu Shuoqi" (On Dr. Joseph S. M. Lau's Discussion of Cao Yu), in *Cao Yu Wang Zhaochun Ji Qita* (Cao Yu, Wang Zhaochun, and others), Hong Kong: Liangyu Bookstore, 1980, pp. 14–19. This collection of articles also includes a useful chronology of the main events in Cao Yu's life and of his major works, pp. 127–135.
7. For example, Chen Pingyuan, "About the National Traits of Cao Yu's Characters," *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Yanjiu Congkan*, No. 1, 1983, Beijing; Tian Benxiang, "On *The Thunderstorm*," *Xiju Yishu Luncong*, No. 1, 1979, Beijing; Xing Xianqi, "On Some Controversial Issues in *The Thunderstorm*," *Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue Yanjiu Congkan*, No. 1, 1982, Beijing.
8. See 7 above.
9. Lu Xun, "Grave. Once Again To Talk about How the Leifeng Pagoda Has Fallen." In an article written in 1957, entitled "Personalities of the Characters in *The Thunderstorm*," Yue Daiyun expressed the prevalent view at that time. "The causes of the tragedy are: that bourgeois life killed beautiful and good things which are against it, that it oppresses and destroys its opponents, and that it employs force to mould the weak into the types it desires." She also wrote, "The destruction of Fanyi is not due to her personal faults, but to the social institutions; it is bourgeois life itself which stipulates the inevitable ending." See Yue Daiyun, *Bijiao Wenxue yu Zhongguo Xiandai Wenxue* (Comparative Literature and Contemporary Chinese Literature), Beijing: Peking University Press, 1987, pp. 249–256.

Chapter 7

The Single Woman as Seen in the Writings of Contemporary Chinese Women Writers

Liu Nienling

In recent Chinese publications, very rarely is there a recognition of "Women's Literature." However, in the *Dushu* monthly, 1982, no. 8, the prominent woman critic Li Ziyun, who is the editor of *Shanghai Wenxue*, wrote:

A recent photo of the literary critic Li Ziyun

> Since the downfall of the Gang of Four, numerous women writers have emerged. According to their creative styles, there are two types: First, there are women writers, who, though very fine and sensitive in writing style, fall within the literary tradition of the past thirty years. Their topics, range, and contents in general are similar to those of the male writers.... The second type is definitely female in characteristics. They are feminine not only in their writing style and their emotions, but most important of all, their works reflect problems facing modern women alone. Their representatives are Zhang Jie, Zhang Kangkang, and Zhang Xinxin.[1]

Perhaps the fact that this new trend has been identified by Li Ziyun, herself a single woman, is significant, and bears upon the dawning phenomenon of women emerging as individuals.

Li Ziyun spoke out as a woman critic, but before her, in the May 4th era, novelists Ding Ling, Bing Xin and Lu Yin all tried in various degrees and levels to sort out the profile and character of a woman as a single independent person, not merely as an appendage of the man who is her father, her husband, or her son. But they are novelists using a novelist's intricate style to allude to the inner anguish of being a woman and her longing to be recognized as a person.

Without the May 4th era women writers, writing as identifiable persons and about identifiable women, the issue of single woman would perhaps not have taken its present form. Since women were household members and often subject to the household masters, the phenomenon of the "Single Woman" could never have happened. Ding Ling wrote about an aspiring actress. Bing Xin[2] and Lu Yin[3] wrote about women intellectuals who went abroad to receive higher education and thus gave up marriage opportunities. These women began to think independently and began to seek themselves. The generation of Ding Ling was the forerunner of what came later. The seed for flowering or the seed for "ill" was planted long before the present generation of women writers. Eve took one bite of the apple; from then on, there was no turning back.

Li Ziyun is among the earliest critics to actually spell out "woman's literature" in terms of woman as a single individual and an independent human being. She pointed out that in the tradition of Chinese literature, for unsaid reasons, the problem of being a woman is a topic to be avoided. Women's existence apart from men in a single's environment is anathematized, a social taboo. Li feels that woman's status in contemporary China has greatly improved. Women are being equally employed in society, but the problems faced by a contemporary woman are somewhat more acute than those faced by their male counterparts.

Although there is no intention to delve into the private life of Li Ziyun, the fact she is single is well-known in the Chinese literary world. She writes extensively on contemporary women writers, not only from a literary point of view, but often from sociological and psychological perspectives.[4] She perhaps feels intensely the experience of being a contemporary Chinese woman, and in particular, the experience of being a single woman. Her personal circumstances make her more aware of what it is like to be a woman and the epitome of being a woman, that is to say a Single Woman. Her very choice of topics, the problems facing a woman in search of herself, bears the marks of her own experience. Although in her writing she has not gone so far as to explicitly coin the term "single woman," she has pointed out that the problem of being a single female is distinctly different from her male counterpart's. By pointing out the difference, she has broken a traditional taboo. While she is writing as a critic on the works of contemporary women writers, she is underlining the problem of a single woman, though she has not explicitly named the role of a "single woman." She has only analyzed the situation. It will yet come, when the status of a single woman is distinctly identified, that being a single woman is not a transient state, that it is not an interim stage in her life, that she exists as an individual no matter how long she exists as a single woman. The fact that a woman may remain single for a significant duration may be recognized and find acceptance as a social role. She may not be pressured to be coupled, and the fact that she is the master of her own fate should also be recognized.

Although Li Ziyun has never named the single woman, she came close to it when she wrote about the works of Zhang Xinxin, Zhang Kangkang and Zhang Jie.[5] These women novelists do use fiction to describe the single woman. They are well ahead of the critics in

indicating this new phenomenon dawning upon the horizon. Of the three Zhangs, only Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin will be discussed here. Zhang Kangkang is searching for herself, and in her novel *Northern Light*, she actually describes a transient stage of a single woman trying to realize herself through a liaison with a man. The woman character in Zhang Kangkang's works is often a woman still searching for fulfillment through a relationship with men.

Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin write about women seeking independence from their male counterparts. Their works are about single women's assertion of themselves. Therefore the single woman's image in their works is clearly there to be examined.

When one speaks of the image of the single woman in Zhang Xinxin's and Zhang Jie's writings, one has to recognize that maturity plays a large part in the characters of their novels. After all, as long as society lacks maturity, single women or single women with dependents will not exist as categories in the census.

However, it is not merely a category in the census; it is the more profound image of a single woman that Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin are trying to depict. It is the kind of maturity that comes with the saying of Descartes: *Cogito, ergo sum*. For this reason, Zhang Kangkang's writing is not discussed here. But in contrast to Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin, a short story of Wen Bin will be examined. Wen Bin's story is about a widowed mother who has raised her children singlehandedly. Though living most of her life as a single woman, she is not a "Single Woman" in the contemporary sense in America, but an ill-fated single woman, a single woman by circumstance, a widow.

On the following pages, the single woman as a young careerist is examined. The single woman as a middle-aged, separated or divorced woman will be found in

Zhang Jie's work. Then the old — but not so old — widow who has not given up hope will be presented as a contrast to the new consciousness found in the words of Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin. It is precisely this new consciousness which has been discussed by Li Ziyun in her works of literary criticism.

But before presenting Zhang Jie's and Zhang Xinxin's novels, one must briefly examine the question: What is a woman in China?

The Imposition of The Male Image

Li Ziyun wrote in *Dushu*:

> On the surface, the novel *Zai tongyi dipingxianshang (On the Same Horizon)* and the short story "Wo zainar cuoguole ni?" (Where Did I Miss You?) reflect different aspects of present living and raise different questions, but, in the final analysis, they share an intrinsic relationship. They both try to reflect the same problem: young women, in the attempt to develop their own careers, encounter certain mental and sociological pressures. Therefore, they feel deep anguish and suffering. In their inner psyche, there is the presence of a rebellious nature and mental protest.[6]

Li proceeds to examine the role of woman in China. She has pointed out that in Zhang Xinxin's short story "Where Have I Missed You?" the heroine suspected her "missing" a chance was due to her masculine appearance:

> She was preoccupied with selling bus tickets, checking tickets, and pushing through the throng of passengers on the bus. She spoke in a professional tone of voice, devoid of the softness of a natural female voice. She announced the names of the stations in the same neuter monotone. She was wearing a camel-collar blue overcoat which covered up the female curves of her body. Amidst the crowd of

> blue-uniformed passengers, who could tell that she was indeed a woman?[7]

Li Ziyun has daringly pointed out to her Chinese readers that for many years in China there has been an imposition of maleness upon Chinese women. The society has called for a masculinization of the female counterparts. Li Ziyun has boldly suggested that this practice of imposing masculinization upon women has been regarded as normal and accepted by Chinese society. Li, however, thinks that such masculinization is abnormal and unfair.[8]

> I exerted my whole body's strength, using my shoulder, my waist, my pair of hands, my legs, and my mouth...that triangular scarf which covered my mouth and my hair over my eyes were a nuisance, yet I had no free hand to brush them away. Suddenly, I felt I was being so wronged. I am after all a girl...yet I was pushing continuously, shouting with all my might. I couldn't for a moment measure up in strength against the throng of passengers. I only knew, even if I was not able to squeeze myself onto the bus, I had to push myself in. The bus would not wait.[9]

Li Ziyun has continued to find there is a protest coming from the heroine's desperate cry for help. It is not only a cry for help, but also an angry protest coming from the anguish of the heroine who is being forced by society to compete with her male counterparts as if she is the same but not equal to them.

The women of China are performing the same duties and work as their male counterparts, yet their differences are deliberately ignored. For many years they were even clothed as men. Li Ziyun thinks this short story carries a protest against the masculinization of women. Women have been made to carry the same load as men in many revolutionary tasks. The female traits of gentility, softness, love of beauty in make-up were in-

terpreted as being bourgeois, and hence undesirable, to be eradicated by revolution.[10]

Li Ziyun goes on to recall that during the years of Party reorganization and rectification movements women were made to look more like men. The more masculine a woman looked, and behaved, the more revolutionary she was regarded by the Party.[11] The end result was the transformation of female comrades, who did not just look like male comrades, but acted like them. This transformation did not stop at the surface but went deep into the female psyche. Li Ziyun argues that if effeminate males are thought undesirable and abnormal, why should a masculinized female be regarded as desirable? There is a basic inequality in the concept of values of being male and being female. Male qualities are admired as positive and desirable, whereas female qualities are negative and bourgeois. There lies the inequality in the whole revolutionary concept of values. Li Ziyun traced the root of the problem from the traditional values of ancient China. A woman must be meek and obedient in order to be considered virtuous. In defiance of traditional values, the new woman must be strong and unyielding. Thus arose the revolutionary image of a good female comrade.

Zhang Xinxin wrote in the same short story:

> Why does our society make so many demands upon the woman? Household duties, social responsibilities and work are thrust upon the shoulders of women as men's equals. Women have no choice but to be as strong and as masculine as their male counterparts.

What Zhang Xinxin was saying was that women were not given a choice of being their own sex. In other words, women were deprived of their natural qualities and exploited by society by not being given any choice.

Zhang Xinxin has raised the following questions: where does true equality lie? Is equal sharing of duties

and responsibilities all there is to equality between men and women? She seems to be saying that the imposition of male values and male images upon women is more an enslavement than a liberalization. The women of China are actually suppressing their female qualities in order to strive to be manly. Yet, according to Zhang Xinxin, woman should be recognized as woman, equal but different. The image of woman should not be the same as that of man. Li Ziyun also seems to agree and wants to call attention to the subjugation of woman to male qualities, especially in the revolutionary process and in reforms.

Zhang Xinxin

Another question raised by Zhang Xinxin is the question of competition. Woman is forced to compete with man even if she is not truly willing to do so. She is made to compete in the bus and off the bus, even though she finds that she does not have the same physical strength as a man in pushing and shoving to get onto the bus. Among the crowd, dressed like man, a woman must therefore behave like a man. To compete like a man is the prerequisite for a modern woman, and Zhang Xinxin is protesting against this requirement. She is writing about the brutalization of the female members of Chinese society. The brutalization consists of the imposition of maleness upon woman without giving her a choice.

In her short story there is also a longing for peace between the sexes. The single woman competing with men is described as a weary woman longing for peace and recognition. Without such recognition as a woman different from men, she is forced to compete as a man. She has missed the man of her life precisely because she is not recognized as a woman. The man she wishes to love

and be loved by is precisely the man she has pushed out of her way in the bus. She has pushed him contrary to her own wish to be a gentle woman. But she has no choice. To be a new revolutionary woman in a revolutionary society, she must compete like a man. The innate qualities of a woman are suppressed and abused, since these qualities are considered bourgeois and reactionary.

For Zhang Xinxin and Li Ziyun the image of a single woman in the new Chinese society is the image of man. She is a copy of the revolutionary male. Both writers think such imitation is an imposition forced upon women by society in the revolutionary process of liberating China from the grip of the past. But is the woman then liberated? There seems to be no simple answer. Zhang Xinxin is looking for such an answer. Li Ziyun is guiding her readers toward a solution. As for Zhang Jie, she does not provide a solution, but does want to make the question an issue.

Zhang Xinxin wants to find a solution, a way out of the imposition of the male image upon woman, as condoned by the revolutionary society. Ironically, she seeks the solution for the purpose of achieving a harmony with men. In Zhang Xinxin's short story, men do not like to see the masculinization of woman.

> After the concert was over, there was a long line of people waiting at the bus stop.
>
> "Shall we walk?" you suggested. I was obviously used to the bus crowd, but I nodded my head in agreement.
>
> We were walking, exchanging our views about the evening's music, and we also talked about the rehearsal which you were engaged in. I as usual talked incessantly, but felt that I was not telling what was in my mind.
>
> "Can we walk a little slower?" you asked.
>
> Ah! I was not conscious that I was walking as swiftly as usual. I wanted to be with you longer,

> even hoping the road would be longer. But out of my habit of chasing after a bus, or rushing to do an errand, my body language had changed into one that was always in haste. My running steps were not coy; my chest and shoulders were sloped forward, heading hurriedly toward our destination. Would you laugh at me again that I have become a man?[12]

The key sentence here is "Can we walk a little slower?" It is a sentence of protest in the disguise of a request. And the protest contains an underlying sentiment of disapproval, especially since the heroine understands what he thought of her before, that she is like a man. The irony here is that she actually wants to prolong the time of walking in order to spend more time with him. The masculinization of the heroine has been so powerful that she becomes manly in spite of herself. Yet, the masculinization is not complete. The heroine is physically more like a man, but she is a woman with a woman's psyche. She wants to complement the man she loves.

When the man of her life was telling about a past love affair, he said:

> "...you are like her but also unlike her...I hope you will change your personality. With mere femininity, the basic feminine qualities are sufficient and powerful enough." At that instant, the man's eyes softened, showing his weakness for her; his feeling toward her was no longer neutral.[13]

He wants her to be a woman for him. He wants a woman, the heroine. But he also makes it very clear, that to be feminine, having the basic feminine qualities, is sufficient, even powerful.

It seems both the heroine and her man long for the restoration of feminine qualities. They both want to go back to what Nature intends for them. They both rebel against the artificial imposition of the male image upon

woman. It is a thirst for Nature and the return to normalcy.

In a passage of internal monologue, Zhang Xinxin writes:

> Are you or are you not fond of me? I am not sure. I know men have different outlooks and different attitudes, but in general, their demand toward a typical woman remains about the same and you are just the same. Yet, a woman like me, whom you described as having male characteristics, will not be well liked. Strange! I have understood this for a long time. I was even proud of my masculine qualities of being cool and self-sufficient. But now, for all the same qualities, I begin to feel sad. Why did I give you such an impression?...Suppose that I freed myself from the pressures of dealing with living in society, of protecting myself from nosy and jealous prying into my private secrets, and set aside the neuter or masculine masks I so frequently have to put on, could I become more likeable? Yes, I could. I wasn't born this way....[14]

The heroine is crying her protest. She wasn't like this. She wasn't born like a man. She has made herself manlike only because of a hostile manly society. To survive in a male-oriented society, she has acquired male features. But how she longs to return to her true nature! How she wants to shake off the masculine mask she is wearing! She wants to develop her true nature. She wants to be let alone, to be what she was originally born into, what she is by nature and by birthright — a woman. "I was not born as such," she protests. "God made me a woman, but society made me a woman who is like a man," she cries, "I want to be a real woman."[15] She resents being a pseudo-man. However much she is like a man, she is not and never can be a real man.

In this short story the image of a male-like woman is portrayed. The problem of being a secondary man, or a

pseudo-man, is reflected in the story of a young woman who works on a bus selling tickets to passengers. The bus symbolizes a fast-moving and competitive society where to survive is to push and shove like a man. The heroine has no time and no chance to let her true qualities come forth in an immense and hostile crowd. When she finds the man she loves, she wants to let her feminine qualities come out to shine for him. But being so suppressed and abused, her feminine qualities have been transformed into an aggressive and competitive appearance. Yet, although she wears a masculine facade, she is deep down a woman, rebelling against a superimposed male image. How she wants to take off that overcoat of hers! "I thought it's just like a man's overcoat; I did not realize it goes deeper into my flesh, into my character. I want to take it off, yet I can't. I am so disappointed."[16]

She wants to take off the overcoat to reveal herself as a woman. She has found her man but missed him, not because he is going away, but because of herself. She has missed him because she has failed to be herself. She has failed because of the male image she has superimposed upon herself.

The Young Woman Careerist

The price to pay to be a single woman seems to be the subjugation of one's true female self.

In her short story, "Where Have I Missed You?" Zhang Xinxin's heroine longs to be a woman and is impatient and annoyed by the male mask she is forced to wear. The heroine is anxious to shed her male image in order to be a woman for a man. In Zhang Xinxin's novel, *On the Same Horizon,* the woman is impatient to shed the image of being a spouse to her husband. The novel is centered on the new breed of female intellectuals whose careers come first. The bond and the interdependence between husband and wife no longer exist. The

central point is personal achievement, as the only thing that matters is self-advancement. The importance of the Self, whether it means self-enrichment or self-aggrandizement, eventually leads to the worship of singleness. There exists not a single moment of doubt that the self comes first. Here, the woman asserts herself totally, unconditionally. How much this has to do with the trauma of the Cultural Revolution, one does not know. The young generation growing up during this period definitely realizes the importance of the Self. It is the Self that has to fight against all odds. Love, marriage, and family do not matter if they destroy Self. It may be that the survival mechanism of the Self has been stimulated to the extreme. The result is that awareness of self-interest has been heightened to an abnormal degree.

The She of the novel *On the Same Horizon* and the He of the novel are both nameless characters. The author has purposely not given them names in order to accentuate the polarity between Woman and Man. In the beginning of the novel there is a simple dialogue:

> "What's wrong?"
>
> "I am married, and the Academy does not admit married students. This is according to the new instruction."
>
> "Don't worry; let's find a way out. Perhaps one should see some higher-up person."
>
> "No use. It's awfully strict."
>
> "Then, divorce. How about using this way out?"
>
> "Do you agree?"[17]

Divorce is no longer a very serious matter. In fact, divorce is crucial to one's future. One's career depends on it. "She" in order to secure a livelihood must get a divorce. She will then get herself admitted to the prestigious Academy of Drama, and after her graduation from the Academy, her future career will be guaranteed. Her livelihood will be ensured and she will be secure for the rest of her life. And he, too. He must secure his fu-

ture in the same way. It is then each for himself and herself. The true survival of the fittest and the true struggle for survival begins. The love, the bond, the mutual care are luxuries to be forsaken.

The She and He of the novel are the new breed of China. Now comes the stage when the single woman truly exists. Only when existing on the same level does true equality emerge. When there is true equality, the interpersonal relationship between a man and a woman will forgo the traditional bonds. This seems to be the message of the novel.

Ironically She loves He, and He loves She. From the moment they first agree to seek a divorce to the final moment when they both have to sign the divorce papers, they continue to love each other. When they move out of their mutual nest, they come downstairs to the outside world. They turn back and see that a light is still on. They go back up to their old home and take a long lingering look at their nest. Sometime later, they meet at an intersection. He sees her on the other side of the street pushing her bicycle, waiting for the light to change. He sees that she is still wearing the same green shirt she wore on the day of their separation. She has put on some weight. This chance meeting is full of nostalgia for both He and She. During the Autumn Moon Festival, they meet at night, wandering on the streets. They are carrying mooncakes in their hands, yet there is no place for them to sit down to eat. They are truly a lost pair; no, actually they are two lost singles.

There are times when she waits anxiously for his phone calls. She is still concerned about his career, his commissions for his art designs. She wonders about the publication of his art works.

She still loves He. She feels her spirit lifted again after she moves back to the dorm and lives like a student. She realizes that living in the dorm gives her freedom of movement. She no longer has to consider the needs

and demands of the other party. She no longer has to subjugate her own desires and her own personality to suit her partner. She does not want to feel constrained again.

> I don't even look at myself in the mirror that often. I don't have to be concerned about my looks anymore, for someone else's sake. Even my failures and new worries are less weighty on my mind.... I don't have to put down my pen to worry about his things. Because I have no one to lean on, I don't let go my worry and my anxiety.[18]

The single woman She is finally freed, freed from the mental burden of having a man, worrying about living with a man, and being a partner to a man. She is free to pursue her own career, although the price she pays is painful. Her existence as a single woman can be lonely and wandering. Her relationship with the man can be nebulous. But she is no longer willing to sacrifice her freedom and independence for marital bliss which is never stable. The loneliness and the longing for her ex-husband are her own choice for her state of mind. She has made a choice to be lonely and to miss her ex-husband. Being alone, she is now the sole master of her fate, however high the price she must pay. "I don't have to worry when he will come home for dinner. I don't have to worry what he wants to eat for dinner."[19] She is freed from the entanglements of marital concern. The Single Woman is thus a state of mind for the young careerist:

> What? An insignificant desire that can occupy my whole mind.... In order to buy him his favorite ham and egg mooncake, I spent the whole afternoon hunting, riding the bike from one store to another, not even letting go of the street peddlers.... I still could not find it. I was so upset and so disappointed. Next year the same time, I probably would have the same desire.

> Strange...is it worth it?
>
> Ah, how I envy myself that I once got terribly upset because of that insignificant little desire.
>
> I remember, when I and He were living together, the more I loved him, the more I relied on him, and the more I fell into the magnetic field of that mental state. Suddenly I asked myself where am I? How about me? Sometimes, I wanted to escape, seeking a retreat, finding myself again, my thoughts, my wishes and my ambition.[20]

But the single woman also has a conflicting state of mind:

> Now, I am truly alone, all by myself, only I am with myself. Amidst this clean and stern living, I feel deeply, and clearly a forlorn feeling. As soon as I have found the well of satisfaction, the well dries up. For whatever reason, I envy my past, and I desire the bygone foolishness of love, the kind of love which may again end in disappointment. I am still anxious about the endless daily chores, perhaps, these, all these, would bring to me the fresh fountain of life, the fresh excitement for life.[21]

The woman as a single is constantly in doubt and constantly in conflict according to Zhang Xinxin's novel. She is in perpetual torment over her male counterpart. When she has him, she is in trouble, in real and concrete trouble. When she does not have him, she is also in trouble, but it is a mere forlorn feeling. She can experience this forlorn feeling in peace, all by herself. "In the darkness, the television flickers on the empty chair. Only me alone in front of the television, silently watching the noisy Beijing Opera...."[22]

She has made her choice. She is also strong enough to bear the loneliness of being alone, as she watches the Beijing Opera. She has work to do, too. She is pursuing her career, therefore she is strengthened by her ambition. The loneliness will not bother her that much.

The Single Woman as Social Déclassé

Unlike the young career woman in Zhang Xinxin's novel who is undaunted, daring, and basically optimistic, with no qualms about getting a divorce, the heroines in Zhang Jie's novels still wear the imprint of an older society. They are equally undaunted and daring, but they feel a deep sorrow for their own fate. Though not giving up hope completely, they come closest to the end of the road. The epigraph of the novella, *Fangzhou (The Ark)*, is an old saying "You are particularly unfortunate, because you were born a woman...."

Zhang Jie

On the other hand, these single women in *Fangzhou* are fighters. They are fighting against their fate of being women. They are fighting against their society which has wronged them, and they are determined to change society. Similar to the heroine in Zhang Jie's earlier novel *Chenzhongde Chibang (Heavy Wings)*, the women are middle-aged, professional women, living as singles, and are engaging in the struggle to change society from one that is aging, encrusted with ancient mores, to a more open and just one.

Zhang Jie's heroines are failed persons who have dropped out of the mainstream and become domestic expatriates for the very reason that they are single women. Mainstream society looks askance at these nondescript single women. Mainstream society really does not know what to do with them. The problem is very real and very concrete. For instance, what is to be done with a woman who has left her husband and therefore cannot remain in her husband's living quarters. Consid-

ering the housing shortage, where can she be put?

> Liu Quan went to request a housing unit from her company. Manager Wei just rolled his eyes and said: "What do you want a housing unit for?"
>
> "Don't you know I'm divorced."
>
> "That makes no difference," he adamantly retorted. "There are married couples waiting for apartments, you know. And now divorcées want them too! It's getting quite ridiculous. [If divorcées could get apartments], everyone would try to figure out some way to get divorced."
>
> "Then, what should I do? Live on the street?"[23]

And how should a man treat a divorcée?

> Liu Quan had not spoken two sentences, when Manager Wei started to get fresh. He said in a lurid way: "Your dress looks good on you; it shows off your curves..." Without waiting to finish his words, he was about to grab her waist.
>
> Liu Quan pretended that she did not care; swiftly she retreated to the chair closest to the exit door of the office. Manager Wei's face turned dark and he was speechless for a long while. Liu Quan felt her own face burning.

What should one do with these single women? Are they fair game? Liu Quan protests: "I am not a barmaid."[25] Why was she born a woman? And a woman who is pretty and attractive. If a divorcée does not belong to someone, does that mean she belongs to everyone? These questions haunt Liu Quan.

Liu Quan finally moves in with two other single women. Her roommates are a movie director and a writer, who all went to elementary school and middle school together, and parted after entering college. After a number of years, they now live together again as if in a women's dormitory. The apartment belongs to Liang Qian, the movie director, who has a powerful father. Yes, it does help for a single woman to have a powerful

father — at least, Liang Qian has a place to stay.

Liang Qian has been a successful director. But only forty years old, she feels like an old woman. She feels that youth has eluded her. She has never enjoyed the youthful days of a young woman, though she was made the same way as other women. She wanted to be pretty and wished that she would always be young. She envies those foreign women who wear make-up to look younger than their age. But she suspects that:

> Maybe it will always remain a paradox. If one has chosen a career over marriage, one loses the life of a normal woman, and forgoes the joys of a normal woman. Who can be as lucky as Mrs. Thatcher who as the prime minister of Great Britain can still bake a cake for her children, who can still dress up prettily. She is lucky; such luck is only rare and accidental.[26]

Though successful, Liang Qian feels lonely and unappreciated. She has passed her youth without the taste of loving and being loved. She passed her attractive years in a painful marriage. How unfair! She asks herself: "Can you be coy in a man's embrace?" "No," she answers.[27] Therefore, she was not made to be with man.

In Liang Qian's life, there was also a matter of priorities. Her art comes first. She never had time to pretty herself up. She always dresses in a drab fashion, looking drawn and exhausted from work. Well, such was her choice. In spite of her father's advice that one must know one's place in the world,[28] she has not observed the propriety of keeping herself in check. She became the professional woman who is ugly in men's eyes:

> Why don't Jinghua, Liu Quan or I ever learn? Our voices do not carry the sweetness and the softness of female voices? Our voices are like the baritone and bass voices of Beijing Opera, deep and coarse. We ourselves are used to our own voices, but how about men? When men listen to our voices,

> they probably react exactly like when we women listen to an effeminate voice of a man, repulsive and sick.[29]

People do not like to deal with women like Liang Qian, so hard and so dry, "like a piece of stale cake, smelling like putrid air."[30] She was like a woman warrior, always fighting, cursing, sneering. With women like her, "what will become of all those men?" Men will find themselves ineffectual, losing their ground in this world.

And look at Jinghua:

> Jinghua loved to speculate and theorize on Marxism, materialism, and dialectics. Liu Quan knew very well, if a woman did nothing but talk about dialectics and materialism, she would scare all the men away. Even though Jinghua possessed a pair of eyes which shone like the sky after a cleansing rain, when she stopped speculating about materialism and dialectics, her eyes enshrouded a man in a silent haze. But what a man wants is a wife, not a lecturer on Marxism and Leninism. How could one change Jinghua? If one asked Jinghua to get rid of her materialism and dialectics, it would be like asking a crippled person to cast off his crutches, or asking a singer to cut his vocal cords....[31]

The year before, Jinghua had written an article which had attracted attention from many authorities on the subject. She was visited and interviewed by editors, reporters, and many other admirers. Her article had also caused controversy, and she had been criticized and attacked. Yet she was proud of her accomplishment; she thought of herself as a good Party member. Isn't Marxism dialectics? Society progresses on dialectics. She welcomed such controversy. Jinghua was the new woman that communist society was supposed to produce. But then one must ask how could she have become a social déclassé?

And how do other women look upon these déclassé women?

> "Ah, Comrade Cao, you are home!" Director Jia gleamed at her with one eye; the other eye glanced behind Jinghua's ears at the corridor, as though checking the apartment.
>
> Director Jia lived next door. She had overheard... voices.... During the Gang of Four period, Jinghua's apartment would always be the one to be inspected and searched, as if their apartment of three single women was the place to hide philandering men. At first they thought every place was searched. Later they realized there was such a thing as "major" places to be checked regularly. In the eyes of others, their apartment was not a decent place, and divorced women were all indecent.[32]

Director Jia is depicted as a nosy neighbor; whenever she hears a man's voice next door, she comes over and knocks on the door of the three single women's apartment. Once she claimed her cat had run over to their apartment. She said that their female cat attracted all the tom cats in the compound. She laughed in a leery way when she said this.

> Oh, my! Being a single woman would attract all kinds of nonsense, I can understand that. But, that this single female cat would also attract all kinds of talk! Oh, I think I should marry off my single female cat![33]

Jinghua was not intimidated by her neighbor's accusation. She defiantly told her that she felt proud of her single female cat for having such a large number of admirers. When she invited Jia to come in to visit, Jia withdrew, as if the apartment of the single women was a leper's colony.[34]

There is a discrepancy between how these single women view themselves and how they are regarded by the outer world. These single women feel they are just

as normal as other women, entitled to look pretty and to be loved. They love fresh flowers as much as other women. They make up their rooms, wash their dishes, and cook together. They feel they are every bit as feminine as others in loving beauty and hating washing dishes. But they are looked upon as queer, decadent, and contaminated. They are also fair game if they are attractive singles like Liu Quan. Jinghua is a bluestocking and is suspected of being unlike a normal woman. Liang Qian, because of her powerful father, is a social disgrace to her family. She is reprimanded for not observing her place in the world.

Yet, these women have the psyche of women warriors, fighting back all the time, and believing that the time is approaching when "the mares will pull the cart."[35] Although these women's lives are ruined in a male society, they protect themselves and support each other in a bond of female solidarity, believing that women are the stronger sex and "the return to a matriarchal society is quite possible."[36]

Many nights they spend alone by themselves:

> Often it was this way, in the evening, the three single women sat under the shadow of a floor lamp. After dinner, the table was piled up with dishes that no one, for one reason or another, felt like washing. Perhaps two of them would smoke in silence, listening to the third woman lamenting, complaining about the injustices of the day. Or two would smoke silently, listening to the fists of the third banging on the sofa armrests. Among themselves, they would not say a word of comfort to one another. After all, what good are sweet sounding empty words![37]

Thus forever the woman warrior fights against social injustice. Zhang Jie's women are defiant and they band together to form a holy solidarity of sisters. Such solidarity is meant to become a social force to pressure so-

ciety to focus upon women's issues. The main women's issue is the single woman, who does not belong to a family headed by a man. She is her own master. She is also the master of her own fate. And society must learn to give her her due as such.

The Heroine of *"Xinji"* ("Eulogy")

The woman author Wen Bin wrote a eulogy to her mother.[38] The story is about an old widow who has single-handedly raised her numerous children. When she was a young widow, she was in love with her cousin who came to live with her and helped her to raise the family. The neighbors talked and sneered, and the cousin was forced to depart. She was alone again and left to face her cruel lot. By the time she was old, she lived with her married children. Her daughters loved her and cherished her, but she felt unfulfilled. She proposed to her married daughters that she would marry the cousin who still loved her. Her children objected vehemently, thinking it was shameful for an elderly mother to remarry. The poor old woman surrendered once again to others' wishes. She remained a widow to her last breath.

This short story written as a eulogy to Wen Bin's mother, won an award as one of the best short stories of 1982. The story is written in a subdued voice, with no trace of sentimentality. The author apparently respected her mother for her courage to live on as a single woman. Her sacrifice for her children was greatly appreciated, but the author does not hesitate to show how wrong it was. Her mother was greatly wronged by society, her neighbors, and her children. It was wrong to ask her mother to sacrifice her love. It was wrong to demand that she continue to be the virtuous widow according to ancient tradition.

When Ding Ling, the veteran woman's voice, read the story, she exclaimed that in a socialist society such a

thing could still happen. Ding Ling was visibly touched by the story, lamenting the fact that social revolution had not brought justice to Wen Bin's mother.[39]

In "Eulogy" the heroine is a traditional one. Though a single woman, she is not a woman warrior as in Zhang Jie's novels, nor the devil-may-care heroine of Zhang Xinxin's novel. She is submissive, obedient, silent. She submits to her fate. She accepts her fate and silently carries on as best she can. She is the "virtuous" one, the one to be eulogized and lamented. Had she rebelled, or had she remarried, would her daughter have written a similar eulogy? One wonders. She is a modern saint belonging to a distant past. She is the single woman who is anachronistic (as Ding Ling commented: Not in today's socialist society!). She is an aberration, an anachronism. The interesting fact is that the story elicited Ding Ling's comment and won a prize. What does this mean? Does it mean that Chinese society has finally understood a single woman's ill lot? Does it mean that Zhang Jie's and Zhang Xinxin's heroines have finally won? Perhaps. But the single woman's lot is still much written about today, and this fact speaks for itself. The single woman is still an issue and still to be written about by women writers who feel deeply about their own fate as single women themselves.

Since women writers continue to write about the experiences of single women, it is clear that the condition of single women continues to be much maligned. The society has yet to accept single women as normal human beings. Among the heroines examined above, none is freed from the stones cast by society, whether she is virtuous or not. If she is a virtuous single woman, she is much wronged and thus victimized by society. If she is not "virtuous," and thus a rebel, she is also victimized. A single woman is a species by herself, a stigma, a thorn in the flesh of society.

A Note of Interest

When Zhang Jie and Zhang Xinxin wrote the stories mentioned in this article, both were singles; and hence these stories to some extent reflect their authors' personal experiences and feelings. Both are now married. Wen Bin is happily married and a fine mother.

Notes

1. Li Ziyun, "Ta tichule shenme wenti?" ("What Issues Has She Raised?") *Dushu*, 1982, no. 8 (Beijing: Joint Publishing).
2. Bing Xin, "Xifeng," *Bing Xin Xiaoshuoji* (Shanghai: Kaimin shudian, 1943).
3. Lu Yin, "Tiaowuchang guilai," *Dongjing Xiaopin* (Taibei: Jiusi Chuban, 1978).
4. Li Ziyun's essays on contemporary Chinese women writers were collected in *Jinghua Rende Xinling (Purifying People's Hearts)*, Published by Sanlian Company of Beijing, 1984.
5. Li Ziyun, "Ta tichule shenme wenti?" *Dushu*, 1982, no. 8 (Beijing: Joint Publishing). Zhang Jie, born in 1937, rose to prominence with her controversial story "Love Must Not be Forgotten," written in 1979. Zhang Xinxin, born in 1953, attracted attention with her story "On the Same Horizon," published in 1981.
6. Ibid.
7. Zhang Xinxin, "Wo zainar cuoguole ni?" *Zhongguo Nüzuojia Xiaoshuoxuan* (Shanghai: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1982). This story, translated by Liu Nienling, is included in *The Rose Colored Dinner*, Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1988.
8. Li Ziyun, op. cit.
9. Zhang Xinxin, op. cit.
10. Li Ziyun, op. cit.
11. Ibid.
12. Zhang Xinxin, op. cit.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid. For a general survey of women writers in contemporary PRC, see Wei Junyi, "Women, A New Force in Chinese Literature," *Cologne Workshop on Contemporary Chinese Literature*, edited by Helmut Martin, Köln; Deutshe Welle, 1986, pp. 9–18. *Chinese Women Writers: Critical Appraisals*, edited by Michael S. Duke, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc.,

1989, contains 13 essays on women writers in mainland China, Taiwan, and abroad. *Modern Chinese Writers: Self-Portrayals*, edited by Helmut Martin and Jeffrey Kinkley, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992, consists of autobiographical essays by 43 writers, some of whom are women, such as Zhang Jie, Wang Anyi, Zhang Xinxin, Chen Ruoxi, and Li Ang. Ye Zhiying, *Dalu Dongdai Wenxue Saomiao* (A Survey of Contemporary Mainland Literature), Taibei: Dongda Publishing Co., 1990, contains a chapter on women's literature. See also, Yue Daiyuh and Carolyn Wakeman, "Women in Recent Chinese Fiction — A Review Article," *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. XLII, No. 4 (August 1983), pp. 879–888.

17. Zhang Xinxin, "Zai Tongyi Dipingxiangshang" (On the Same Horizon), first published in *Shouhuo* (Harvest), 1981, No. 6, Shanghai: Wenyi Chubanshe, p. 182. This story is included in *Zhongguo Nüxing Xiaoshuo Xuan* (Selected Stories about Chinese Women), edited by Li Ziyun, Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1991. For an insightful analysis of Zhang Xinxin's writings, see "Fiction's End: Zhang Xinxin's New Approaches to Creativity," by Carolyn Wakeman and Yue Daiyun, in *Chinese Women Writers: Critical Appraisals*, pp. 196–216.
18. Zhang Xinxin, op. cit., p. 195.
19. Ibid.
20. Zhang Xinxin, op. cit., p. 196.
21. Ibid.
22. Zhang Xinxin, op. cit., p. 197.
23. Zhang Jie, *Fangzhou* (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 1983), p. 52. An English translation of this novella is included in *Love Must Not Be Forgotten*, which consists of seven stories by Zhang Jie, translated by Gladys Yang and others, published by China Books, 1986. Lu Zhenghui, a literary critic in Taiwan, thinks that Zhang Jie is not very successful in *Fanqzhou* in portraying her characters and their marriages and that she does not give clear and realistic impressions of her characters' personal and social problems. See Lu Zhenghui, *Xiaoshuo yu Shehui* (Fiction and Society), Taibei: Linking Press, 1988, pp. 245–259.
24. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 14.
25. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 15.
26. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 24.
27. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 27.
28. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 35.
29. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 37.
30. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 39.

31. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 43.
32. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 17.
33. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 18.
34. Ibid.
35. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 2.
36. Ibid.
37. Zhang Jie, op. cit., p. 49.
38. Wen Bin, "Xinji," *Dang Dai*, 1982, no. 2 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1982). This story is included in *Zhongguo Nüxing Xiaoshuo Xuan*, edited by Li Ziyun, pp. 217–246. For a very favorable review of this story, see "The Inspiration that 'Eulogy' Gives to Creative Writing," by Yang Gueixin, in *Xinwenxue Luncong*, No. 4, 1982, Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, pp. 31–32. An excellent English translation of this story under the title "Silent Commemoration" is included in *The Serenity of Whiteness: Stories by and about Women in Contemporary China*, selected and translated by Zhu Hong, New York: Ballantine Books, 1991, pp. 246–281.
39. In an informal conversation with Liu Nienling, October 22, 1983. Concerning women in the PRC, there are a considerable number of books and articles. Only a few are suggested here: Phyllis Andors, *The Unfinished Liberation of Chinese Women: 1949-1980*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983; Emily Honig & Gail Hershatter, *Personal Voices: Chinese Women in the 1980's*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988; Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, translated from the French by Anita Barrows, New York: Urizen Books, 1974; Margery Wolf, *Revolution Postponed: Women in Contemporary China*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985.

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A sketch by CatherineYi-yu Cho Woo

Liu Nienling received her education at the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University, Harvard University, and the University of Cambridge. She works as an author and publisher and is editor of *Chiu Shui* magazine. Among her publications are: *The Marginal Man*, *On Literature and Arts*, and *The Sages of the Bamboo Grove*, all published in Hong Kong and

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Appendix: Glossary

Ba Jin 巴金
Bing Xin 冰心
Caizi 才子
Cao Yu 曹禺
Chang E 嫦娥
Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀
Fan Pen Chen 陳凡平
Chengzhong de Chibang 沉重的翅膀
Cixi 慈禧
Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯
Ding Ling 丁玲
Du Shiniang 杜十娘
Dushu 讀書
Ernu Yingxiong Zhuan 兒女英雄傳
Fangzhou 方舟
Fengshen Yanyi 封神演義
Gongming 功名
Honglou Meng, (Dream of Red Mansions, Dream of the Red Chamber) 紅樓夢
C. T. Hsia 夏志清
Hsu Kai yu 許芥昱
Huoshui 禍水
Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉
Jiaren 佳人
Jing Ping Mei 金瓶梅
Jinghua Yuan 鏡花緣
Jingu Qiguan 古今奇觀
Lao Can Youji 老殘遊記
Lao She 老舍
Li Qingzhao 李清照
Li Ruzhen 李汝珍
Li Yu ning 李又寧

Li Ziyun 李子雲
Lie Nü Zhuan 列女傳
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Phylis Lan Lin 藍采風
Lin Yutang 林語堂
Liu E 劉鶚
Liu Nienling 劉年玲
Liu Rushi 柳如是
Lu Yin 盧隱
Nichai Hua 孽海花
Nühuo 女禍
Nü Wa 女媧
Ping Shan Leng Yan 平山冷燕
Poan Jingqi 拍案驚奇
Qing 清
Shan Hai Jing 山海經
Shang 商
Six Chapters From A Floating Life 浮生六記
Sun Kang i (Kang i Sun Chang) 孫康宜
Tanci 彈詞
Tang Zhu Wen Zhou Zhuan 唐祝文周傳
Tao Yuanming 陶淵明
Tsung Su 叢甦
Wan Ning 萬寧
Wang Wei 王維
Water Margin 水滸傳
Catherine Yi-yu Cho Woo 卓以玉
Wu Chengen 吳承恩
Xi Wang Mu 西王母
Xia 夏
Xiaoren 小人
Xingshi Hengyan 醒世恆言

Xixiang Ji 西廂記
Xiyou Ji 西遊記
Yang Gueifei 楊貴妃
Yuanzaju 元雜劇
Yuanquxuan 元曲選
Yuli Hun 玉梨魂
Zai Tongyi Dipingxianshang 在同一地平線上
Zeng Pu 曾樸
Zhang Jie 張潔
Zhang Xinxin 張辛欣
Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠
Zhengming 正名
Zhou 周

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